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2025

No. 47

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE

of the POARCH CREEK INDIANS

creek corner

Ancient Echoes

UNEARTHING A ONE-IN-A-MILLION
FOSSIL FIND ON CREEK
ANCESTRAL HOMELAND

**POARCH 101: STANDING ALONG THE WATER-
THE UNBROKEN CONTINUITY OF OUR CREEK LINEAGE**

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**Honoring Service,
Strengthening Care:
A Conversation With
Dr. George Semple**

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MEGAN ZAMORA
Editor, Creek Corner

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

“



f fall is my favorite season, then November has got to be my favorite month of the year. We celebrate Native American Heritage Month—a time to honor our traditions, share our stories, and recognize the values that continue to shape who we are. It's also Veteran's Day, a moment to pause and reflect on the courage and sacrifice of those who have served our country. I often think of my own family—my granddad, great uncle, and cousins—and the stories they've shared about their military experiences. I'm deeply grateful for their service, and for every person who has made that same choice to protect our freedom and way of life.

And of course, November brings the Poarch Creek Indians Annual Thanksgiving Pow Wow—a time of homecoming, gathering, and gratitude. As the holiday season begins, I encourage everyone to shop local and support our Tribal artisans. It's amazing to see several of our artisans who learned their craft through Cultural Department classes now using those skills to share our culture and contribute to their livelihood through entrepreneurship. Their work tells our story in ways words cannot. When we buy from one another, we're not just purchasing goods—we're investing in our people and helping preserve the creativity, craftsmanship, and culture that make our community so special.

November also carries a sense of anticipation. The air cools, the days shorten, and our community begins to buzz with excitement for our Pow Wow. For many, it's a time to return home, reconnect with family, and celebrate who we are together.

Like many of you, Pow Wow is always a highlight of my year. I look forward to seeing everyone, visiting with familiar faces, and celebrating the culture that unites us. Wishing you safe travels, warm hearts, and a joyful time at our Annual Thanksgiving Pow Wow.

“

*...shop local and support
our Tribal artisans.
...When we buy from one
another, we're not just
purchasing goods—we're
investing in our people...*



POARCH CREEK INDIANS

COWBOY Christmas Parade

Dec 12 • 5:30 pm



VIP Area for Tribal Elders
Outdoor Living Area at the
Assisted Living Facility

After-Party
Poarch Creek Community Center
*Light refreshments and a
chance for photos with Santa!*



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.

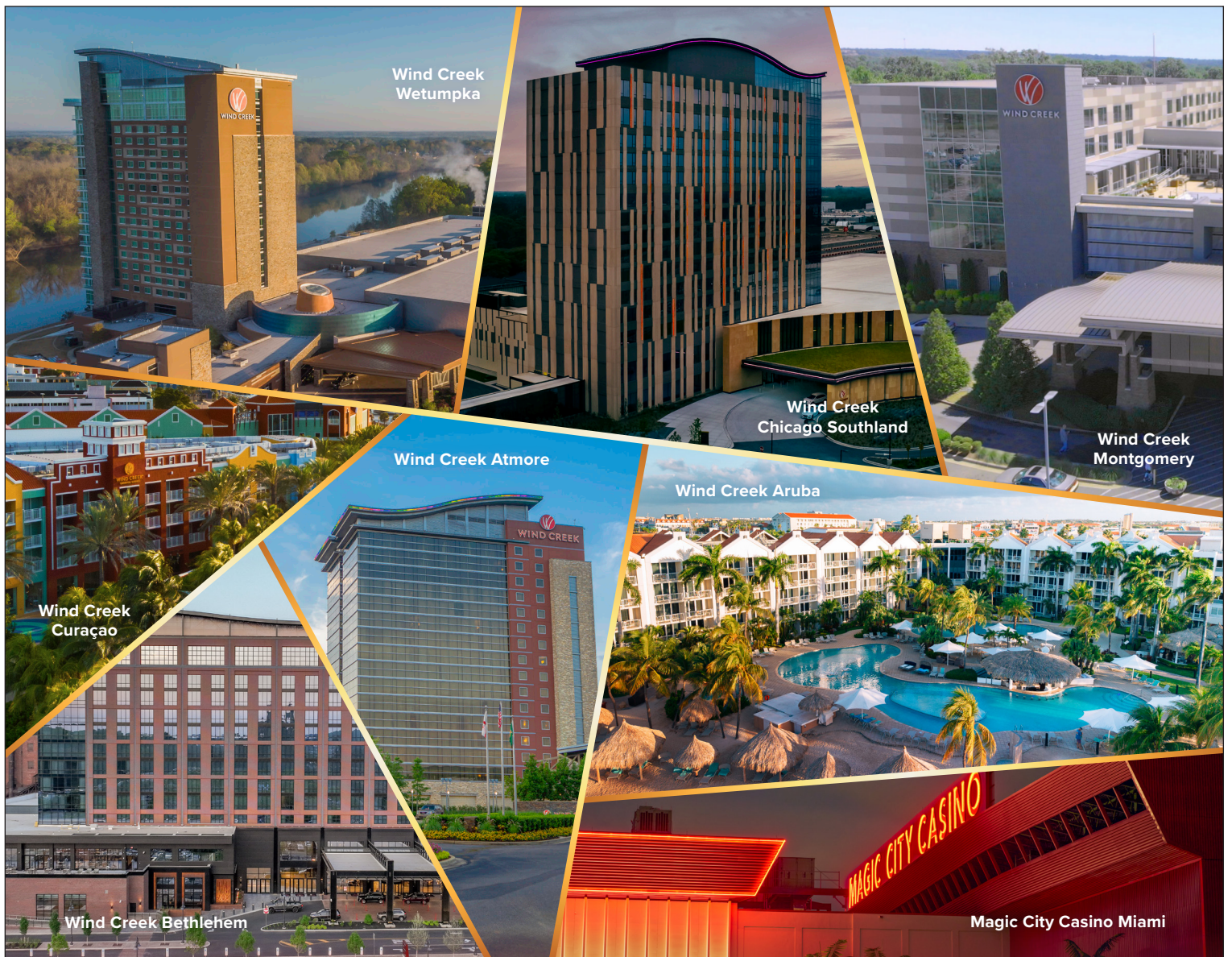
TOP ROW (LEFT TO RIGHT)

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

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DEPARTMENT SPOTLIGHT: PERDIDO RIVER FARMS ANNOUNCES MOVE OF CUSTOMER OPERATIONS TO NEW PERDIDO RIVER MEATS FACILITY

By Karen Rodriguez

Perdido River Farms is proud to announce that all customer operations, including public and wholesale, have officially moved to the new **PERDIDO RIVER MEATS** building, located at **490 Atmosphere Road, Atmore, AL**. This state-of-the-art 23,000-square-foot meat processing facility marks an important step in fulfilling our mission of bringing high-quality, locally raised beef directly to the community.

The Perdido River Meats facility is USDA-inspected, ensuring safe, wholesome beef that is fully traceable throughout the process. With a modern retail storefront, the facility serves both retail and wholesale customers. It also offers processing services for custom cuts.

At Perdido River Meats, customers can purchase premium beef products, raised on grass and grain-finished for flavor and nutrition. Our selection includes everything from ground beef and sirloin to various cuts of steaks, roasts, and even soup bones – all available directly from our retail store.

“The combining of all our customer operations to the new Perdido River Meats facility represents more than just a move – it’s a commitment to our community, our customers, and the quality of the food we produce. We’re proud to offer locally raised, USDA-inspected beef in a way that supports local farmers, strengthens food security, and delivers exceptional products directly to our customers,” said John English, Director of Perdido River Farms.

Perdido River Farms is the Poarch Creek Indians cattle operations that manages more than 3,300 acres of land. With this operational shift, the Tribe’s farm will continue to focus on bringing ranch-to-table quality by finishing and processing its’ beef on-site through Perdido River Meats. In partnership with the USDA’s NRCS Tribal Office, we follow conscientious stewardship practices, including soil testing, proper fertilization, and rotational grazing, to ensure sustainable land use and the production of nutrient-rich grazing forage and hay.

We welcome the community to visit the Perdido River Meats retail store, conveniently located behind the Creek Travel Plaza at 4740 Jack Springs Road, Atmore, AL, and experience the difference of locally raised, carefully processed beef.

RETAIL STORE HOURS

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Sunday Closed

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GUARDIANS OF JUSTICE

THE ROLE OF TRIBAL LAW ENFORCEMENT IN PUBLIC SAFETY AND JUSTICE

By Sharon Delmar

Any given day on the Poarch Creek Reservation, a police cruiser might glide down the quiet roads that connect our community, a familiar sight symbolizing both safety and sovereignty. For the Poarch Creek Indians, public safety has always been about more than enforcing the law. It's about protecting the people, preserving the culture, and governing in a way that reflects Creek values of balance, respect, and restoration.

Across Indian Country, tribal law enforcement and court systems are vital expressions of sovereignty. While each tribe's justice system is unique, all share a mission to serve their people with fairness, compassion, and accountability. The Bureau of Indian Affairs supports these efforts through funding and partnerships, but for tribes like Poarch Creek, true strength comes from within. Here, the Tribal Police Department and Tribal Court work side by side to ensure that justice is not only served but lived.

Few people know that partnership better than Keesha O'Barr Frye, who has served the Tribe for thirty-three years. As Tribal Court Administrator, she oversees the judicial system, probation program, and sober living facility. "The Tribe funds about seventy-five percent of our court system, with the rest supported through Bureau of Indian Affairs contracts," she explained. "That independence allows us to make decisions based on what our community needs most, not what an outside agency dictates."

Through Keesha's guidance, Poarch's judicial system has become a respected model in Indian Country. The Tribe's Wellness Court, one of the first four tribal drug courts in the nation and the only one still in operation, focuses on rehabilitation over penalty. Participants engage in treatment, peer mentoring, and community reintegration. "Our peer support program brings in people who've walked that road themselves," Keesha said. "People with long-term sobriety help others find the same stability."

She also highlighted programs like Stepping Stones, the Tribe's sober living facility, which expanded from six to ten beds to better support individuals reentering the community after treatment. "Our goal is to reduce relapse and give people real second chances," she said. "We don't just sentence someone and send them away. We work with them to find healing and accountability."

**“
We don't just
sentence someone
and send them
away. We work
with them to
find healing and
accountability.”**

**KEESHA O'BARR FRYE,
PCI TRIBAL COURT
ADMINISTRATOR**

While Keesha and her team focus on the judicial side of justice, Police Chief Chris Rutherford leads the law enforcement arm with the same commitment to compassion and community. With more than three decades of service and twenty-three of those years in law enforcement, he has watched the department evolve into one of the most respected in Indian Country.

“Our Tribal communities are extremely safe,” he said. “Where some reservations face high rates of assaults or homicides, we’re fortunate not to have that. Most of what we deal with involves theft, drugs, or uninvited guests coming onto the reservation. Our job is to make sure our citizens always feel safe.”

The department’s approach blends technology and community engagement. Officers use surveillance cameras, license plate readers, and a 24-hour dispatch system to monitor the area, while hosting Coffee with a Cop events, teaching self-defense classes, and serving as school resource officers. “The more the Police Department is seen as part of the community, the better our communication becomes,” Rutherford said. “When people feel comfortable coming to us, that’s how we prevent problems before they happen.”

Tribal Police Officers are cross-deputized with local sheriffs’ offices and certified through the Bureau of Indian Affairs as Special Law Enforcement Commission (SLEC) officers, granting them federal authority. This allows them to work seamlessly with state and federal partners, including the U.S. Attorney’s Office, DEA, U.S. Marshals, FBI, and BIA. “When we needed FBI assistance with a death investigation, one call was all it took,” Rutherford recalled. “They sent their crime scene unit immediately. That’s the kind of partnership that keeps our community safe.”

Through these experiences, Poarch Creek officers gain valuable perspective beyond their own borders. “Working with the BIA allows our officers to support other reservations and bring back new perspectives,” Rutherford said. “It deepens their understanding of what tribal policing means across Indian Country.”

...continued on next page

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.



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Native Helpline

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Submission Criteria

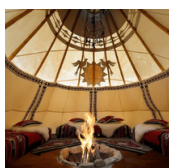
Compensation is based on content and quality as described below.

- 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).

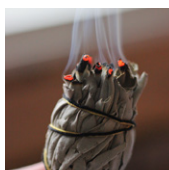
Selections will be made at the end of each month. Compensation will be processed during the following month.

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

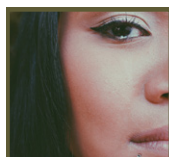
Indigenous Story Telling Themes: Native-centered, Trauma Informed and Empowerment Based Advocacy.



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.

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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.

“Police officers come into contact with people on their worst day. If you treat them with respect and humanity, they’ll remember that.”

**CHRIS RUTHERFORD,
PCI TRIBAL POLICE CHIEF**

Still, Chief Rutherford is candid about the department’s challenges. “We have three areas that need improvement—retirement, pay, and our take-home vehicle program,” he said. “These are essential for recruiting and retaining qualified officers, especially when we’re competing with state and federal agencies that offer better benefits and established retirement plans.”

He explained that the federal government has begun taking steps to address these disparities through the Tribal Law Enforcement Parity Act, introduced in July 2025 in both the House (H.R. 4712) and Senate (S. 2452). The legislation aims to correct pay disparities across tribal jurisdictions and create a path for tribal police officers to participate in the Bureau of Indian Affairs’ federal retirement program.

“This would be a major step forward,” Rutherford said. “The Parity Act would help with recruitment and retention not just here, but across all Indian Country. When considering pay, you must look at the total benefits package, not just a specific dollar range. The cost of those benefits to the employee matters, as does what surrounding agencies offer and the limitations they face.”

Beyond pay and benefits, Rutherford emphasized the need for greater access to federal law enforcement databases. “Programs like the Tribal Access Program have helped, but there’s still room for improvement,” he said. “We also need more tribal-specific technology grants. Often, our priorities don’t align with current grant cycles, and by the time we’re ready to apply, the focus area has shifted and the opportunity is gone.”

Rutherford believes collaboration between tribal, state, and federal partners is key to progress. “One of the advantages we have here is a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with local and state agencies that provides cross-deputization and shared support,” he explained. “Most tribes aren’t so lucky. Some are even told they can’t operate off-reservation. Having MOUs in place, spelling out each agency’s responsibilities, helps build trust and ensures we’re working together for the good of the community.”

Asked what an ideal public safety system would look like for Poarch Creek, Rutherford didn’t hesitate. “Teamwork,” he said. “When every part of the system does its job—law enforcement, the courts, and community programs—the whole system works. A well-staffed, well-equipped police force, supported by the right technology and strong partnerships, makes all the difference.”

Both Keesha and Chief Rutherford agree that at the heart of it all is people. “Police officers come into contact with most people on their worst day,” Rutherford reflected. “If you treat them with respect and humanity, they’ll remember that. When they come back to the community, that’s what stays with them.” Keesha echoed that thought: “We can’t solve every issue through the court system alone. It takes a community-wide effort from police to probation, from families to recovery programs.”

The Poarch Creek justice system stands as a testament to what’s possible when culture, compassion, and cooperation come together. It’s a model that honors sovereignty while embracing humanity, proving that justice can be both firm and kind. From the courtroom to the patrol car, every part of the system reflects a shared commitment to protecting not only Tribal citizens, but their way of life.



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FAMILY FISHING TRIP LEADS TO “ONE-IN- A-MILLION” FOSSIL DISCOVERY

By Lauren Giddeons & Karen Rodriguez



PICTURED Poarch Creek Indians Tribal Citizen and student researcher Kimberly Gregson (left) with paleontologist Andrew Gentry (right) studying the fossil of *Ueloca colemanorum*, a newly discovered leatherback sea turtle from Alabama. | Credit: Telegraph Creative

A family of four recently discovered the fossilized shell of a 32-million-year-old leatherback sea turtle while fishing along a river in south Alabama. The turtle shell, which is roughly 4 feet long and 3 feet across, represents a new genus and species of leatherback sea turtle and is one of the most complete fossils of its kind found anywhere in the world. The new species, *Ueloca colemanorum* (pronounced “Wee-low-juh kohl-man-or-um”) was named by the Poarch Creek Indians Calvin McGhee Cultural Department in collaboration with a team of paleontologists from Alabama and California.

Adam Coleman and his wife Adrienne have spent years taking their two children, Talah and Corey, on regular fishing trips near their home in south Alabama. During these trips, the family occasionally takes breaks from fishing to search for fossils along the riverbank. Fossil hunting is a hobby Adam picked up from his father, and one that he now passes down to his children. “My dad got me into collecting fossils when I was a kid,” said Adam. “Now we look for them every time we’re on the river.”

In the spring of 2021, the family took a fishing trip that would change their lives forever when they came across something extraordinary embedded in a massive limestone boulder. “I’d never seen anything like it,” recalls Adrienne. “We knew it was probably a fossil but there was no telling



PICTURED Paleontologist Jun Ebersole drilling into the boulder containing the Ueloca fossil. | Credit: Brian Jones

what kind.” Without knowing what they’d found or who to ask for more information, the Coleman’s decided to keep it a secret. For months, the family regularly visited the bizarre find, often eating lunch in the shade of the cliff that stood just behind the huge, dome-shaped fossil.

More than a year later, Adam happened to see a news article about a paleontologist with the Learning Campus at Gulf State Park named Dr. Andrew Gentry. Adam contacted Dr. Gentry and asked if he would be willing to visit the site to try and identify what the family had found. Although skeptical, Gentry agreed. “When I saw the fossil for the first time, it was hard to believe what I was seeing,” said Gentry. “It was absolutely breathtaking.” Gentry, whose research focuses on the fossil turtles of Alabama, realized that the Colemans had uncovered the fossilized shell of an ancient leatherback sea turtle.

According to Gentry, “leatherback sea turtles are unique for having a shell made up of a mosaic of tiny bones called ossicles instead of

“ ———
When I saw the fossil for the first time, it was hard to believe what I was seeing. It was absolutely breathtaking.

**DR. ANDREW GENTRY,
 SENIOR EDUCATION
 AND RESEARCH
 MANAGER AT
 LEARNING CAMPUS,
 GULF STATE PARK, AL**

————— ”

the broad, flattened plates typical of most turtle shells. When leatherback turtles die, the collagen that holds the ossicles together quickly decays and the mosaic falls apart. This makes intact fossil leatherback shells exceptionally rare.”

Later that day, Gentry reached out to his colleague Jun Ebersole, a paleontologist and the Director of Collections at McWane Science Center in Birmingham, AL, to discuss the significance of the find. Gentry and Ebersole spent the next few months putting together a team of researchers from McWane Science Center, the Geological Survey of Alabama, Dauphin Island Sea Lab, Alabama Aquarium, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Corp to assist in retrieving the fossil. After the recovery effort, the enormous fossil was carefully transported to a research lab where Gentry and Ebersole assembled a group of scientists to clean and study the specimen.

The researchers determined that the fossil dated to the early Oligocene Epoch (~32 million years ago), represented a new genus and species

...continued on next page



CHRISTMAS AT OWA

NOVEMBER

Wednesdays

**Ballads &
Bubbles**

11/8

**Salute & Celebrate
Veterans**

11/15

**Walk to End
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11/22

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11/22, 11/29 & 11/30

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PICTURED An artist's rendering of *Ueloca colemanorum* exhibiting the deep-diving behavior characteristic of leatherback sea turtles. | Credit: Elizabeth (Medena Drakorus) Hiley

of leatherback sea turtle, and was one of the most intact leatherback turtle shells known from the Western Hemisphere. One of the members of the research team, Kimberly Gregson, is a Tribal Member of Poarch Creek Indians, and because the fossil was recovered from an area that is part of the Creek ancestral homeland, it was decided that this new leatherback turtle should be partly named in the Creek language of Muscogee (spelled in traditional Creek as “Mvskoke”). First Generation Decedent Samantha Martin with the Poarch Creek Indian’s Calvin McGhee Cultural Department, and Dr. Marcus Briggs-Cloud, Muscogee Speaker, worked with the researchers to create the genus name *Ueloca* (pronounced Wee-low-juh) which comes from a combination of the Muscogee words “Uewa” (pronounced Wee-wah) meaning water and “Locv” (pronounced Low-juh) meaning turtle.

“This is the first fossil to carry a Muscogee name and it’s exciting to see our language recognized in this way. Opportunities like this weave our voice into history and ensure it’s never forgotten,” said Samatha Martin, Creek Language Coordinator for the Poarch Creek Indians. “I’d like to thank Dr. Gentry for allowing the Tribe to be a part of this unique experience and extend a special thank you to Dr. Marcus Briggs-Cloud for his advice and expertise in the early stages of this project.”

The species name, “colemanorum” honors the Coleman family for their initial discovery of this fossil and their subsequent help with its recovery..

“This is truly a one-in-a-million fossil,” said Ebersole. “Specimens like this one are why Alabama is quickly becoming a globally recognized hot-spot for fossil diversity.”

Ueloca not only adds to the incredible fossil record of the region but is also helping scientists piece together the origin story of the modern species of leatherback sea turtle. According to Gentry, “the remarkable preservation of *Ueloca* allowed for a more comprehensive anatomical study than is generally possible with fossil leatherbacks. By comparing *Ueloca* to leatherback fossils from around the world, we see evidence that there may have been at least two distinct groups of leatherback sea turtles that underwent a similar evolution over the last 40 million years.” Despite their similarities, only one of the two groups survived to the present-day. The other appears to have vanished from the fossil record millions of years ago and scientists are unsure about the cause of their disappearance. “*Ueloca* has helped advance our understanding of the history of leatherback sea turtles but there are still unanswered questions,” said Gentry.

The fossil has since been transported to McWane Science Center in Birmingham, Alabama where it is currently on public display. Gentry describes this project as a highlight of his career and a testament to how the study of fossils brings people together. “It never ceases to amaze me how quickly paleontology can turn a group of strangers from entirely different backgrounds, disciplines, and cultures into a cohesive team,” said Gentry. “The thrill of discovery is universal.”

FOR MORE INFORMATION

The study titled “A new leatherback marine turtle from the lower Oligocene of North America and a phylogenetic nomenclature for Dermochelyidae” was published today in the open access journal *Palaeodiversity* and can be downloaded by scanning the QR code below.



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A DRAUGHT OF THE CREEK NATION

UPPER CREEK



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

POARCH 101

Standing Along the Water

THE UNBROKEN CONTINUITY
OF OUR CREEK LINEAGE



Near Montgomery, the Coosa and Tallapoosa Rivers join to form the Alabama River. This river junction was the epicenter of life for the Alabama and Koasati peoples during the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries. Tribal towns such as Taskigi, Coosada, Muklassa, Tallassee (or Little Tallassee), Hickory Ground, and others along these rivers were home to our ancestors of that era.

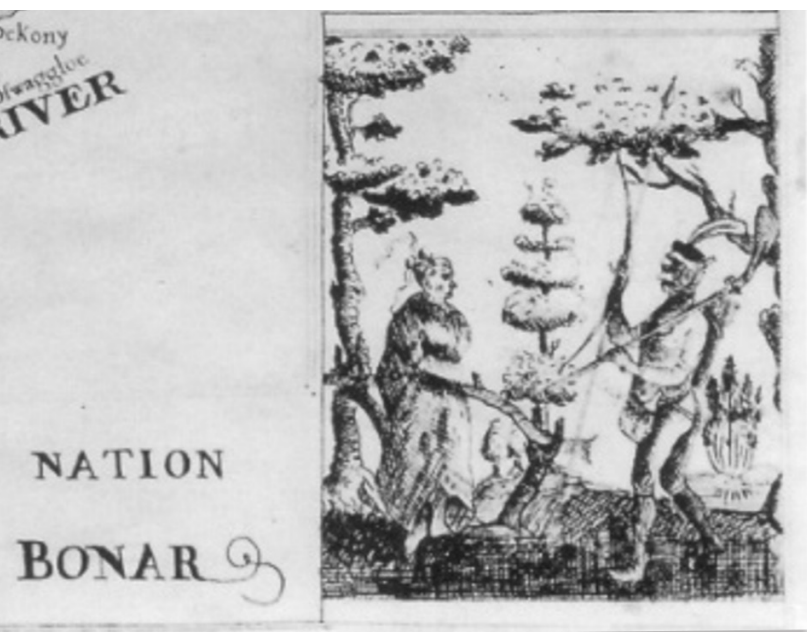
This homeland also gave rise to a remarkable line of women whose names form the foundation of our Tribal bloodlines: Sehoy, Sehoy McGillivray, Sehoy Weatherford, Sophia McGillivray (Durant), and Elizabeth Weatherford (Moniac). Through their resilience and perseverance, we were able to remain here in Poarch, Alabama.

This article offers a glimpse into the women who stood toe-to-toe with colonial America and refused to surrender their mothers' homelands. Their enduring spirit continues to guide us forward as confident stewards of those same lands.





PICTURED 1757 Map. The focused area above shows the confluence of the rivers and ancestral towns shown—spelled Cusatees, Teskigees, Moccolous, Little Tallises, and more.



SEHOY

Witness to a World Transformed

Living in the late 1600s and early 1700s, Sehoy belonged to the Wind Clan (Hotvlkvike), one of the most important clans within Creek society. Her name has been passed down to her descendants for nearly 400 years. Through matrilineal inheritance, her children carried authority and rights over the surrounding lands.

Sehoy's homelands were those of the Alabama and Koasati, who had long lived at the river confluence before becoming part of the Upper Creek Nation. In the early 1700s, French traders built Fort Toulouse near one of their towns, Taskigi. After the French and Indian War in 1763, English officials and settlers moved into the Fort Toulouse area. With their arrival, many Alabama and Koasati families migrated westward to Louisiana and Texas, while those who remained gradually adopted the language and many customs of the Mvskoke people.

European trade transformed the lives of Native peoples in the region, yet their world was still shaped by the memory of the Mississippian chiefdoms that had once flourished here. According to an Alabama (Alibamu) oral tradition, their ancestors moved northward from the great Bottle Creek Mound complex in the Mobile/Tensaw Delta, a major settlement of that earlier world. Many of Sehoy's descendants later returned to this homeland, and some still hunt and fish there today. For generations, they have treasured the area as a place deeply tied to identity and memory.

Sehoy may have had more than two children, but only two are known from surviving accounts: a son called Red Shoes and a daughter, Sehoy McGillivray. Records of Native women in the 1700s are scarce, often limited to scattered notes from traders and colonial officials, and much of their lives must be pieced together through oral tradition. This silence in the written record reflects how colonial reporters often overlooked or minimized women's roles, even though in Creek society some women held significant authority through the matrilineal clan system. Both oral tradition and historical sources affirm Sehoy as the matriarch whose clan rights and ancestral standing gave authority to her children and grandchildren. When she passed away around 1730, she left a foundation for a lineage of Alabama Creeks whose influence would profoundly alter the course of history.

...continued on next page



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SEHOY MCGILLVRAY***Where Two Worlds Became One***

Sehoy McGillivray lived during the height of colonial rivalry, when France, Britain, and Spain competed for control of Creek trade alliances from every direction. Her life bridged Tribal traditions and the new pressures of European expansion, securing influence that extended across both Native and colonial worlds.

Oral tradition and most contemporary accounts remembered her as a full-blood Upper Creek woman. Yet her French son-in-law later claimed that her father was French, a story likely crafted to enhance his own standing when petitioning for rank in the French army.

With Scottish trader Lachlan McGillivray, Sehoy had several children, including Alexander, who became the Creek Nation's principal diplomat and one of the most important Native American leaders of the post-Revolutionary era, as well as Sophia and Jeanette. Through another marriage, she bore a daughter, also named Sehoy, and a son, Malcolm McPherson II, who would later serve as Mekko of Hickory Ground.

Her matrilineal authority allowed her husband and children to reside on lands from the Little Tallassee, north on the Coosa River near Wetumpka, and south to the Mobile/Tensaw Delta. Traders could not simply settle there without Creek consent; it was through marriage to powerful Creek women, such as Sehoy McGillivray, that they gained access to favor. Oral tradition recalls that while pregnant, Sehoy dreamed of piles of manuscripts, a vision seen as a prophecy of her son Alexander's future as a diplomat and writer.

Though the date of her death is uncertain, her influence endured through her children and descendants, who carried her clan's authority into the generations that followed. As a matriarch of the Wind, Sehoy McGillivray left a legacy that shaped the course of Creek history during one of its most turbulent eras.

SOPHIA MCGILLIVRAY (DURANT)***The Woman Who Spoke for a Nation***

Sophia McGillivray, later known as Sophia Durant, emerged as a woman of remarkable authority during a time of confusion and transformation. She played a central role in settling Hickory Ground, a new community that grew from Little Tallassee. Visitors frequently remarked on her presence in council, where she often spoke with eloquence and authority on behalf of her brother Alexander. Fluent in multiple languages and respected as the eldest daughter of a Wind Clan matrilineage, she embodied the balance of Creek tradition and leadership in an era of rising colonial pressure.

Her household reflected the blending of Creek, African, and European worlds. At Hickory Ground and Little Tallassee, Creek families and enslaved African Creeks lived side by side. Though Sophia's household held enslaved people by colonial law, a reality that cannot be overlooked, their lives were not

structured under the harsh regime of plantation slavery. European outsiders noted with surprise that Creeks and African Creeks labored communally, celebrated together, and lived in independent cabins, giving the settlement the appearance of a thriving village rather than a plantation. Sophia herself lived in a modest hut, described by observers as poor, and some criticized her for refusing to exploit enslaved labor to elevate her status. Later descendants, such as David Tate, would educate and even free enslaved people decades before Emancipation, continuing this complex relationship to bondage within the Sehoy line.

Sophia married Benjamin Durant, a man of both Native and African descent, and together they raised at least six children. Her role as a mother did not diminish her influence in public life. In 1790, while her brother Alexander was in New York negotiating a treaty with President George Washington, Creeks threatened to attack nearby settlers in the Tensaw. Despite being eight months pregnant, Sophia rode more than 150 miles on horseback from Little River to Hickory Ground. There, she confronted the chiefs, secured the arrest of the ringleaders, and prevented bloodshed. Only two weeks later, she gave birth to twins at Hickory Ground. When Alexander died in Pensacola in 1793, Sophia once again exercised her authority. Rejecting the claims of his Scottish relatives, she ensured that his remains were returned to ancestral ground between the Alabama and Tombigbee Rivers. More than a decade earlier, she and Alexander had been entrusted with strengthening and stabilizing Creek communities in the Tensaw area near Choctaw Bluff, reinforcing them as barriers against European encroachment and as bases for Creek trade at Mobile and Pensacola.

Sophia's authority continued to expand into the next century. In 1802, Mvskoke and Alabama headmen confirmed her rights to a vast territory stretching between the Alabama and Escambia/Conecuh rivers, ensuring her authority was formally documented so that Creek matrilineal power would also be recognized in colonial law. The southwestern corner of this domain lay in the Tensaw area at the mouth of Holley Creek. Under the 1765 treaty, it had once extended 12 miles farther south to Rice Creek, but after Alexander's death, steady encroachment over the next 37 years pushed the Creek boundary northward to Holley Creek. It was at this point that the Federal Road reached the Alabama River, where travelers crossed at Mimms Ferry.

Even in the face of these troubles, Sophia Durant's leadership endured. Her life stands as a testament to resilience, diplomacy, and strength during one of the most difficult and defining eras in Creek history.

Her life stands as a testament to resilience, diplomacy, and strength during one of the most difficult and defining eras in Creek history.

...continued on next page



PICTURED Seho's Grave Marker at William Weatherford Memorial Park

SEHOY WEATHERFORD

The Matriarchal Trader

Seho Weatherford, sister of Sophia, lived in the mid-to-late 1700s, when Creek country faced mounting colonial pressures. Oral traditions differ on whether her father was Scottish trader Angus McPherson or a leader from the Tuckabatchee Tribal town.

At the age of eight, she entered the household of Jacob Moniac, father of her future son-in-law Sam Moniac, possibly after the death of her mother. From her first marriage she bore Eloise and David Tate. In her second marriage, to Charles Weatherford, a trader of Creek and European descent, she had five children, including Elizabeth Weatherford and William Weatherford, remembered among his people as "Truth Teller" (Oponvkv-fvccv-hayv). William later rose to prominence as the leader of the Red Stick faction during the Creek War. After his death, his legacy was romanticized in Alexander Meek's 1855 poem *The Red Eagle: A Poem of the South*, but he was never called Red Eagle in his lifetime.

Seho Weatherford's life reflects the authority Creek women held in trade and clan inheritance. She carried on trading for much of her adult life, even after separating from Charles Weatherford, who remained at Coosada. Contemporary records confirm her role as a trader, while oral traditions and written accounts connect her lineage to Little Tallassee, Hickory Ground, Taskigi, Coosada, Tuckabatchee and the Tensaw, demonstrating the mobility of Creek families who moved fluidly between towns across their ancestral homelands.

In 1799, she inherited the property of her brother Malcolm, Mekko of Hickory Ground, in accordance with matrilineal custom. Seho Weatherford died around 1813, just as her son William emerged as a Red Stick leader in the Creek War. She and William were buried in Baldwin County, where their graves remain memorialized today; reminders of a family whose influence shaped Creek history, not far from where her brother Alexander was laid to rest at Choctaw Bluff.

**ELIZABETH “BETSY”
WEATHERFORD (MONIAC)**
Rooted Through the Storm

Born in 1779, Elizabeth was the daughter of Sehoy Weatherford and the wife of Samuel Moniac, remembered as “Old Man Sam.” While many families were forced to leave after the Creek War of 1813–1814 and during the Indian Removal Act of 1830, Elizabeth remained.

Sam Moniac, a signatory for Little Tallassee at the Treaty of New York, married Elizabeth in the late 1700s. In 1808, they opened a tavern that became a gathering place in the years leading up to the Creek War, until it was destroyed in the conflict. Their household, located 10 miles up the Alabama River from the Holy Ground, embodied the deep divisions of that war. Sam, often accused of siding with U.S. forces, refused to join the Red Sticks, while their son Alexander Dixon fought as a Red Stick warrior. Another son, David Moniac, became the first Native American graduate of West Point at the age of 22 before dying in the Second Seminole War.

Sam’s loyalties were contested even among U.S. troops. At a court of inquiry, he was blamed for misleading soldiers through the swamps as a scout during the Battle of Holy Ground. Later, he died in Pass Christian while traveling with the sixth detachment of the Creek Removal.

Their son Dixon attempted to emigrate west but was stopped at gunpoint by Big Warrior’s son, Tuskenehaw. Dixon’s marriage to Elizabeth “Betsy” Elhert of Muklassa, from whom many families of today’s Poarch Creek communities trace their ancestral heritage. Elizabeth and Sam’s daughter, Levitia Moniac, married William Sizemore, also an ancestor of Poarch Creek families.

Elizabeth is likely buried at Judson Indian Cemetery in Poarch, Alabama, in one of the many unmarked graves. After Sam’s death, she lived with her daughter-in-law, Betsy Moniac, whose marked headstone still stands at Judson. Through turmoil, division, and the diminishing of Creek homelands, Elizabeth Weatherford Moniac endured. She never left the land of her mother and grandmothers. Through her, the Sehoy lineage survived and remained rooted on what was reduced to less than 640 acres of ancestral ground, despite cessions, betrayals, removals, and even civil war within families; she remained.

Sehoy, Sehoy McGillvray, Sehoy Weatherford, Sophia McGillvray, and Elizabeth Weatherford remind us that Creek history is not only about wars and treaties, but also about the mothers, grandmothers, and daughters who grounded their people to their land. Across centuries of struggle and change, from colonialism to the Creek War and Indian Removal, they carried forward their authority, land, and matrilineal traditions. Their leadership was central to the survival of Creek families, binding us forever to the Coosa, Tallapoosa, Alabama, and Escambia/ Conecuh Rivers. Their story flows on in us, as it always has and always will.



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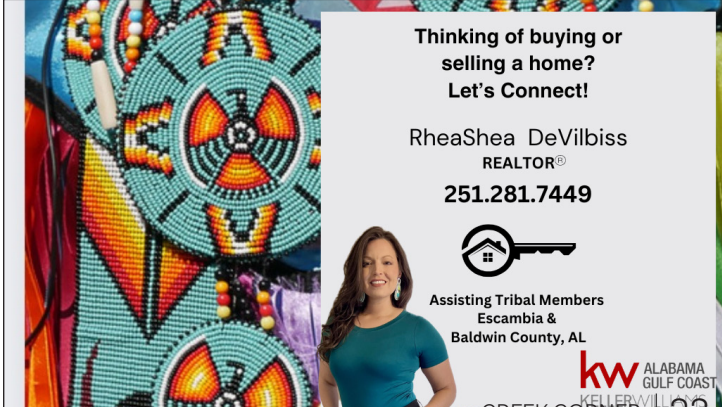


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ON THE TRAIL OF
THE HOLLYWOOD INDIAN:

REEL INJUN

By Sharon Delmar

R

Reel Injun (2009), is a documentary by Cree filmmaker Neil Diamond. In the film, he hits the road across the U.S. to dig into how Hollywood has portrayed Native Americans over the years.

He shows how films often stuck Native people into narrow stereotypes—either as “savage” enemies or as doomed “noble” figures—and how those images affected the way both outsiders and Native communities themselves saw Indigenous identity.

Along the way, Diamond interviews Native actors, filmmakers, and activists. They share funny, frustrating, and powerful stories about what it was like to see those portrayals on screen—and how modern Native creators are now taking control of their own stories.

The film blends humor, history, and personal insight. It’s part critique, part celebration, and ultimately about reclaiming authentic Native voices in cinema.

WHERE TO WATCH

Streaming: Digital Rental & Purchase

Amazon Prime Video: available to rent or buy

Apple TV: available to buy

Sundance Now: available to stream with subscription

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Tubi: watch free with ads

Plex: watch free with ads

Physical Media

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Blu-ray editions available through specialty retailers

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

Share your recommendation

with Sharon Delmar at sdelmar@pci-nsn.gov.



TRIBAL CITIZEN SPOTLIGHT

A CONVERSATION WITH DEBORAH HINOTE

From the Classroom to the Community

By Sharon Delmar

When I sat down with Deborah Hinote, I immediately felt the warmth and passion she carries for children and families. Deborah's path has taken her from the classroom as an educator to the world of writing and entrepreneurship, but at every step, her heart has remained in the same place—helping families thrive.

"I loved teaching," Deborah told me with a smile, "but I began to see that families needed more support beyond the classroom. I wanted to be part of that bigger picture, helping parents and children strengthen their relationships".

That "bigger picture" became Hinote-Connections, the business Deborah founded to coach and mentor families as well as provide training and workshops. In her role, she helps parents find calm in the chaos of daily life and equips them with tools to foster better communication and mutual respect within their families.

Her passion has also taken shape in writing. Deborah has published her first book, *Why Don't Grown-Ups Listen*, which explores the challenges of communication between parents and children. She has also written a second book, not yet submitted to a publisher, and a third book is already in the works.

"These books come from real experiences," she explained. "They're about giving families simple, practical ways to build stronger relationships."

Her words are gentle but firm, a reflection of the belief that respect and communication must always be at the heart of family life. "When parents and children feel heard," Deborah said, "everything changes. It creates an environment where both sides grow stronger together."

One of the highlights of our conversation was recalling the 2020 Census, when I had the privilege of working with Deborah on her Census efforts for the Poarch Creek community.

Together, we worked to ensure every tribal citizen was counted—a task that carried incredible weight for funding and grant eligibility. In addition to her work with Poarch

Creek, Deborah also served as a Tribal Specialist for the U.S. Census in the Northeast, extending her impact well beyond our own community.

"Getting an accurate count is so important," she emphasized. "It impacts funding and grants that our community depends on. Every number matters."

Seeing Deborah's dedication firsthand was inspiring. She approached the Census not just as a project but as a way to serve the Tribe and Indian Country more broadly, ensuring resources and opportunities for future generations. It was truly an honor to stand alongside her during that effort.

Deborah isn't stopping anytime soon. Looking ahead, she hopes to continue expanding her work, offering more tools and resources for families within the tribal community.

"My hope," she shared, "is to continue equipping parents with what they need to bring peace and connection into their homes. Strong families build strong communities, and that's what I want to be part of."

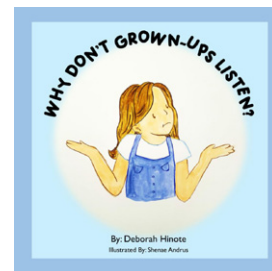
Deborah Hinote's story is one of growth, courage, and service. From the classroom to authoring books, from launching a business to civic engagement, her journey reflects her deep love for families and the Poarch Creek community.

Talking with her reminded me that at the core of all meaningful work—whether in education, business, or community service—are relationships built on respect and communication. And that's exactly what Deborah continues to champion with every step she takes.

“
I loved teaching, but I began to see that families needed more support beyond the classroom.
”

**DEBORAH HINOTE,
AUTHOR OF
WHY DON'T
GROWN-UPS LISTEN**

Deborah Hinote's book, "Why Don't Grown-Ups Listen?," is available for purchase on Amazon.





HONORING SERVICE, STRENGTHENING CARE

A CONVERSATION WITH DR. GEORGE SEMPLE

By Megan Zamora

W

hen Dr. George Semple walks through the doors of the Buford L. Rolin Health Department, he carries with him more than a stethoscope and decades of medical experience. He carries the discipline of a Marine, the perspective of a Navy physician, and the heart of a servant leader who believes deeply in the power of community.

Dr. Semple's journey to Poarch has been anything but ordinary. He spent 32 years in the military—eight as a Marine infantry officer and 24 in the Navy Medical Corps—serving both in hospitals and alongside Marines in operational deployments. His career took him around the globe, including tours in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Horn of Africa, where he provided critical medical care in the most challenging of environments. Most recently, he worked with the U.S. State Department's Special Immigrant Visa Program, helping Afghan citizens who had assisted U.S. forces transition safely to new lives in America through a medical clinic in Germany.

That spirit of service is what ultimately led him home. Though originally from Pennsylvania, Dr. Semple has long called Pensacola, Florida home, where he completed both his family medicine and aerospace medicine residencies at the Naval Hospital and Naval Air Station. His family grew up in the area, and his roots are firmly planted here.

Now, as he steps into his role at the Buford L. Rolin Health Department, Dr. Semple sees a chance to blend his experiences serving diverse populations with a new mission: supporting the health and well-being of the Poarch Creek community.

"One of the things we're working on right now," he shared, "is implementing the patient-centered medical home model. It's about reorganizing how our clinics operate—improving communication, reducing redundancy, and making sure every Tribal Citizen feels supported by a dedicated care team."

Dr. Semple is also committed to strengthening veteran-focused care. With nearly 10% of the Poarch Creek Indians being veterans, he understands their unique needs.

"Veterans are near and dear to my heart," he said. "I've walked in those boots, and I know the importance of having someone who understands your journey."

Looking ahead, Dr. Semple is working with his team to expand the clinic's services, from adding new medical providers and dentists to introducing state-of-the-art equipment like ultrasound and growing the community health program, which includes diabetes education and in-home nursing support. He envisions a future where Tribal Members and First Generation descendants can access world-class care without leaving the community.

As we celebrate Native American Heritage Month this November, and pause to honor our veterans on Veterans Day, Dr. Semple's story reminds us of the values that guide us: service, resilience, and the responsibility to care for one another. His path from military service to serving the Poarch Creek community is a powerful example of how lived experiences can be transformed into healing, leadership, and hope.

**“
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POARCH CREEK INDIANS DONATE \$25,000 TO AMERICAN HEART ASSOCIATION TO FUND CPR TRAINING FOR ESCAMBIA COUNTY SCHOOLS

By Lauren Giddeons & Karen Rodriguez

I

n a continued commitment to community health and education, the Poarch Creek Indians donated \$25,000 to the American Heart Association to support CPR training across Escambia County Schools. The funds will be used to provide CPR training kits that equip students and staff with hands-on CPR instruction, empowering them with critical lifesaving skills.

The ceremonial check presentation took place at the Poarch Creek Tribal Council offices, where faculty participated in a hands-on CPR training demonstration led by the American Heart Association.

"Poarch Creek Indians are proud to invest in the health and safety of our community by supporting CPR training in our schools," said Cody Williamson, President/CEO of Creek Indian Enterprises Development Authority. "This partnership with the American Heart Association and Escambia County reflects our commitment to investing in the next generation, not just academically, but with the practical, lifesaving skills that can make a difference in critical moments."

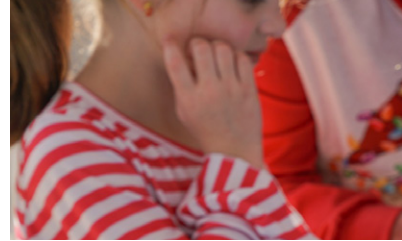
The AHA's CPR in Schools program provides schools with training kits that allow educators to teach hands-only CPR in a single class period. With the support of the Poarch Creek Indians, kits will be distributed throughout Escambia County Schools, expanding access to this critical training.

"Thanks to the Tribe's generosity, hundreds of Escambia County students will receive CPR training that could one day help save a life," said Bridgett Dunn, Senior Development Director of the American Heart Association, Alabama and Mississippi Gulf Coast.

“

Thanks to the Tribe's generosity, hundreds of Escambia County students will receive CPR training that could one day help save a life..

**BRIDGETT DUNN,
SENIOR DEVELOPMENT
DIRECTOR OF THE
AMERICAN HEART
ASSOCIATION**



LIGHT UP THE SEASON AT OWA PARKS & RESORT!

By Catherine Hasty

Experience our North Pole magic, watch the Christmas tree sparkle and kick off your holiday shopping with our Black Friday deals. There's magic waiting for you at OWA Parks & Resort this November.

SALUTE AND CELEBRATE

November 8 | 10:00am - 4:00 pm

Bring the family to celebrate, honor, and enjoy a day filled with pride, gratitude, and community spirit! Join us for a fun day honoring our veterans and active military. Kick off the morning with a presentation of colors, the National Anthem, and a moving recognition of heroes on OWA Island. Then explore patriotic fun across Downtown OWA, from thank-you note writing and the Wall of Honor, to dog tag decorating, themed photo ops, and inflatable challenges inspired by military training. Enjoy a live performance from local bands as we come together to salute those who serve.

NORTH POLE EXPERIENCE

Weekends in November (22, 23, 29, 30)

Holiday Magic Arrives with our annual North Pole Experience! Enjoy some unforgettable craft-time with the elves while waiting for your optional photo opp with Santa. Check our website for additional information and activities.

BUBBLES AND BALLADS

Wednesdays in November | 11:00 am - 2:00 pm

Grab your friends and join us for some mid-day fun with our Sing-A-Long brunch at Towne Tap. Come hungry, sip happy, and get ready to sing along to live music while enjoying a delicious brunch menu.

CHRISTMAS TREE LIGHTING & FIREWORKS

November 22

Kick off the most magical season of the year with OWA's annual Christmas Tree Lighting! Featuring special guest Taylor Hicks, watch Downtown OWA sparkle with our annual tree lighting, plus enjoy a breathtaking holiday fireworks show.

BLACK FRIDAY AT OWA | November 28

Unlock unbeatable deals and thrilling savings this Black Friday at OWA Parks & Resort! Join us for exclusive offers, exciting activities, and shopping adventures.



The thrills at OWA don't stop with the holidays! Continue to enjoy year-round fun at Tropic Falls this month. Visit Tropic Falls Theme & Water Park every Saturday & Sunday starting at 10:00am for rides, slides, and endless fun.

The entertainment continues at the **Brandon Styles Theater** with a full lineup of comedy and magic. Check out Brandon Styles Magic Show on select Wednesdays at 7:00pm, and the Brandon Styles Variety Show every Tuesday & Saturday at 7:00pm. And try to crack the case at the interactive Murder Mystery Dinner Show Defective Detective on November 7.

OWA Theater continues their new lineup of live music and entertainment this month, with great shows including:

- Nov 8** Don Louis LIVE!
- Nov 11** Larry Gatlin (Frank Brown International Songwriters Festival)
- Nov 12** Taylor Hicks Songs and Stories (Frank Brown International Songwriters Festival)
- Nov 15** Mixtape Presents Back to the Boombox! (80's & 90's Tribute)
- Nov 20** An Evening with Shawn Mullins (Songs, Stories & Lullabies)
- Nov 21-22** White Tie Rock Ensemble Presents: Trans-Siberian Orchestra—The Ultimate Holiday Rock Experience

For more information and a complete listing of events checkout visitowa.com

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184 Program is only offered to members on active tribal roll and in designated geographic areas. See a United Bank representative for complete details. United Bank NMLS# 494759

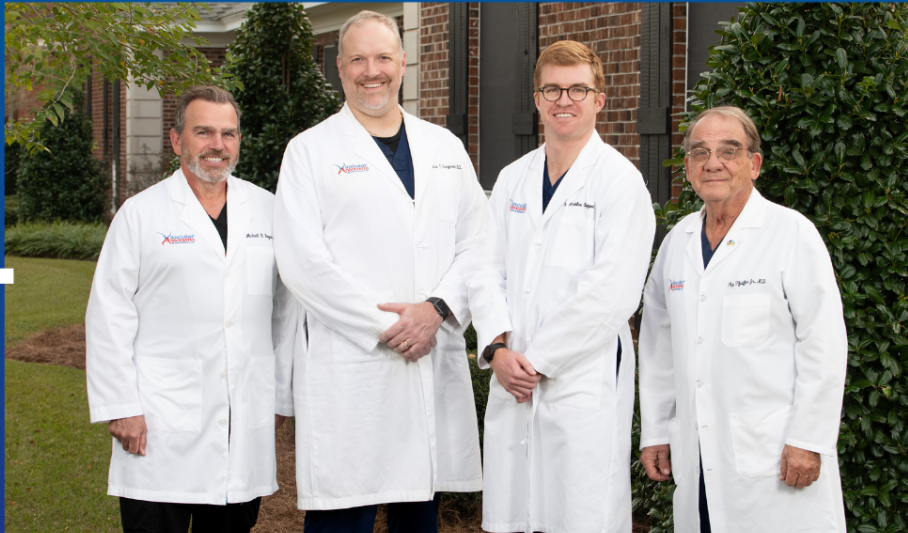


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- ◆ **Varicose & Spider Veins**
- ◆ **Aortic Aneurysms**



WIND CREEK BETHLEHEM TEAM MEMBERS TEE UP FOR A CAUSE

By Amelia Tognoli

**“
This is my favorite
volunteering event,
and our Team
Members love to
play golf.**

**SUSAN STACHOWSKI,
COMMUNITY RELATIONS
COORDINATOR AT
WIND CREEK BETHLEHEM**

Last month, five Wind Creek Bethlehem Team Members hit the greens at the Taggart Family Foundation Golf Tournament held at Riverview Country Club in Easton, PA. They joined more than 110 golfers from various organizations and companies, all swinging for a great cause.

“This is my favorite volunteering event, and our Team Members love to play golf,” said Susan Stachowski, Community Relations Coordinator at Wind Creek Bethlehem.

The annual golf tournament is the Foundation’s only major fundraiser. Since its launch in 2011, it has contributed more than \$150,000 to support community organizations, including Donegan Elementary School, the Hispanic Center of Lehigh Valley, Victory House, the Boys & Girls Club of Bethlehem, the Lynfield Community Center, and Northampton Community College.

The Wind Creek Bethlehem property has proudly served as the tournament’s sponsor since its inception. All proceeds go directly to the Taggart Family Foundation, which is dedicated to “supporting services, experiences, and education for those living in poverty.” Events like this highlight Wind Creek’s commitment to our communities.

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Food - Fuel- Gifts



Atmore - Poarch - Wetumpka ^{EV}





ENVIRONMENTAL DEPT



E-WASTE RECYCLING



BATTERIES and ELECTRONICS ONLY

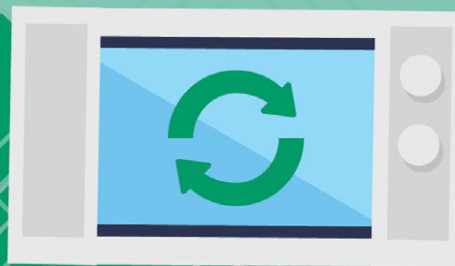
November 1



8am–Noon Fire Station 1 / 5971 Jack Springs Rd

ENTER BY MARTIN RD / EXIT ONTO JACK SPRINGS

Call Tiffany Lozada 251-368-9136 ext. 2683
or email tlozada@pci-nsn.gov
for more info.



ACCEPTING ALL ELECTRONICS
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IN LOVING MEMORY OF *Jake Orvan Bailey*

As November approaches, the family of Jake Oryan Bailey, tribal member, would appreciate prayers and support at the anniversary of his passing on November 20, 2020. All of us grieve in our own ways and time- but sometimes the pain is still immediate- sharp as a knife and other times a dull ache. Always a reminder he is still no longer with us. We know he is watching over us- probably laughing with us.

Jake has missed important family events- his niece Kyiah's beautiful wedding, daughter of tribal member Billy Bailey & Cheyanne Bailey in September and another year of birthdays. Jake has missed new milestones of his children's- celebrating Kadence's first home, Elijah getting a deer hunting, and Poarcha getting a driver's learner permit. Each of them are a testament to his lasting legacy.

*With Love,
Liesl, Kadence, Poarcha & Elijah Bailey, and family*

BULLETIN



TAHO APPLICATION

ATTENTION TRIBAL CITIZENS

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

Application Deadline:

STARTS: Monday, October 6, 2025

ENDS: Friday, December 12, 2025

To Apply, You Will Need to Provide:

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

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



Internal Communications

5811 Jack Springs Road
Atmore, AL 36502

CREEK CORNER

NOVEMBER 2025 IMPORTANT DATES

11.1	ELECTRONICS ONLY RECYCLING EVENT Poarch Creek Fire Station #1	8:00 AM-12:00 PM
11.3	SUBMISSION DEADLINE December Issue	
11.3-4	MUSEUM GIFT SHOP CLOSED Inventory	
11.4	TRIBAL COURT Tribal Courtroom	
11.6	TRIBAL COUNCIL MEETING TC Chambers	4:00 PM
11.7	FAMILY COURT Tribal Courtroom	
11.11	GOVERNMENT OFFICES CLOSED Veterans Day	
11.18	TRIBAL COURT Tribal Courtroom	4:00 PM
11.20	TRIBAL COUNCIL MEETING TC Chambers	
11.21	FAMILY COURT Tribal Courtroom	
11.27-28	PCI 53RD ANNUAL THANKSGIVING POW WOW Pow Wow Grounds	
11.27-28	GOVERNMENT OFFICES CLOSED Thanksgiving	

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.