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# **CREDITS**

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"Our experiences bring lessons in resilience, community, and stewardship of the land–lessons that are critical for building a future that benefits everyone."

# THE IMPORTANCE OF DEI FOR THE NATIVE AMERICAN COMMUNITY

IVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION (DEI)

have become critical cornerstones for building better workplaces and communities, and October has been acknowledged as the month for bringing awareness to these important initiatives. Yet, while the focus of many DEI efforts tends to revolve around broad categories of race, gender, and culture, it's essential to spotlight the Native American community. Our unique history, experiences, and contributions are often overlooked in mainstream DEI conversations, despite the profound significance to the tapestry of American society.

At the heart of DEI is the idea that diversity isn't just about numbers, but about truly understanding and appreciating different perspectives. For Native Americans, this means recognizing our rich cultural heritage, as well as the challenges our people have faced for generations. The history of Native peoples in the United States is one of resilience, strength, and community, but it's also one marred by colonization, broken treaties, and systemic marginalization.

Equity takes this a step further. While diversity focuses on representation, equity asks: How can we ensure everyone has the resources and opportunities they need to succeed? For Native American communities, this means addressing disparities in education, healthcare, and economic opportunities. Native Americans are often underrepresented in higher education and leadership roles, and face significant health disparities. True equity means making space for Indigenous voices in decision-making processes and addressing the unique barriers we encounter.

Inclusion, meanwhile, is about fostering environments where everyone feels they belong. For Native American individuals, this means more than just a seat at the table—it's about creating spaces that honor and uplift Indigenous identities. Too often, Native cultures are reduced to stereotypes or sidelined altogether. DEI efforts must actively work to dismantle these harmful narratives and instead celebrate the rich diversity of Native cultures, languages, and traditions.

But why is it so important to include Native Americans in DEI initiatives? Because our stories are an integral part of America's past, present, and future. Ignoring our contributions and challenges erases a critical piece of our collective history and weakens the efforts we make toward true inclusion. By ensuring that Native American perspectives are part of the DEI conversation, we not only correct historical wrongs but also enrich our understanding of diversity itself.

As we continue to strive for a more equitable and inclusive society, let's make sure Native American voices are heard, respected, and celebrated. Our experiences bring valuable lessons in resilience, community, and stewardship of the land—lessons that are critical for building a future that benefits everyone.

At its core, DEI is about recognizing the humanity in each of us. And when we ensure that Native Americans are not just included but embraced in this movement, we take an important step toward a more just and inclusive world for all.



# TRIBAL LEADERS

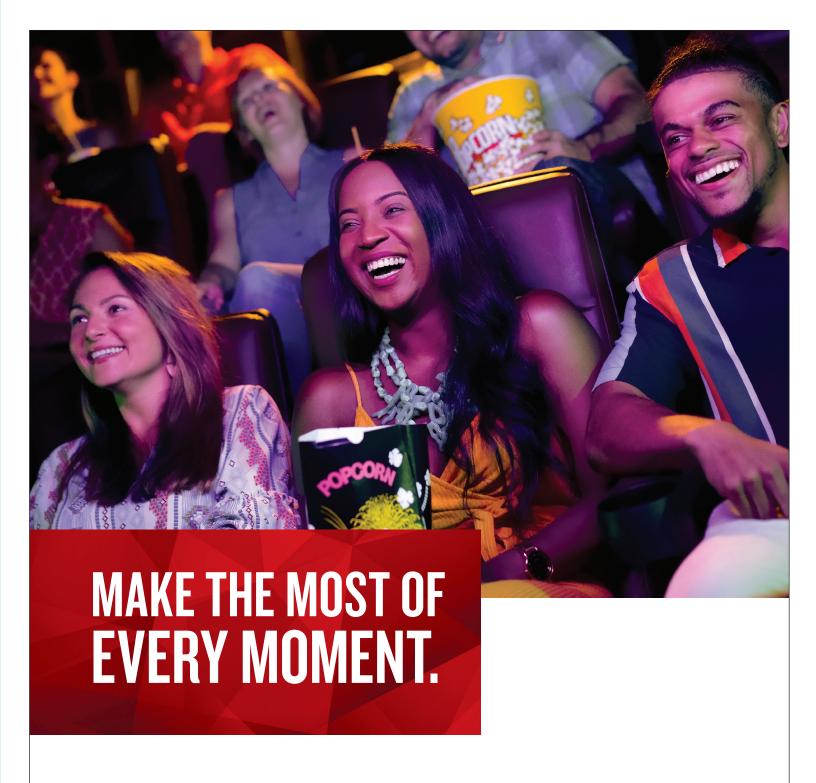
The mission of the Poarch Creek Indians is to protect our inherent rights as a sovereign American Indian Tribe, promote our culture and beliefs, to help our Tribal Citizens achieve their highest potential, maintain good relations with other Indian tribes and units of government, acquire, develop and 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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**DEWITT CARTER**At-Large Tribal Council Member

t is obvious Tribal Council Member Dewitt Carter has a passion for his Tribe and people. He shows this readily in how he does not back down from a challenge when it comes to his beliefs. Dewitt will always stand ready to defend them, just like when he enlisted in the U.S. Air Force where he served our Country for five years. Councilman Carter knows what it's like to make a commitment and stick with it. I was able to talk with him when he was in between meetings a couple of weeks ago and caught up with the Native cowboy/entrepreneur turned Tribal Councilman to see what he has been up to over the past year. What I learned from talking with Dewitt is that, since he was elected to serve his people in 2016, he has not lost his drive to keep this Tribe moving forward.

Dewitt's motivation to continue serving in a leadership role at PCI is heavily influenced by his upbringing. He grew up in the Poarch Community and being poor had a significant impact on him. From an early age, Dewitt learned that they shared everything they had with their neighbors. "When you grow up poor, you just seem to have a different level of compassion than someone who may not have lived that way because you know what it is like to have little to nothing. When you work and earn something you are inclined to appreciate it more," commented Carter.

Growing up hard prepared him for this role of service to his people. Although he may not always completely agree with other Tribal Council Members, in the end he knows that the decisions made are for the benefit of Tribal Citizens. There have been many challenges this past year, but the one that stands out to him, especially on the political level, is the gaming bill that was in play in the State of Alabama. Dewitt said it brought the Tribe, "as close as we have ever come to changing the lives of our Tribal Citizens in an adverse way. As long as I can remember (and I've been around a long time) we have never been that close to having at least one third of our profits taken away from us, meaning our dividends would have been gone."

He shared that his political career has been dealing with a myriad of different politicians which at times can be a challenge because they do not always follow through with their promises. This has been hard for him to get used to because, as he says, "I was raised that you are only as good as your word." He further elaborated that, even though he's experienced disappointments, there are a lot of "good ones" out there, which helps to keep everything balanced out.

As a Council Member, he and the Tribal Council are always looking for new ways to positively impact Tribal Citizens while maintaining what the Tribe has built. He is extremely proud of the many connections he has made throughout Indian Country and shared that some of these tribes are potential investors in our hotel ventures Dreamcatcher and Doradus. These interactions help further the interests of the Poarch Creek Indians. He is also involved with various other



projects across the Tribe's entities (such as the casino in Miami and Wind Creek Chicago) and is excited about the potential positive impacts this will have on Tribal Citizens.

Dewitt is so thankful for the last eight years that he has been on the Tribal Council and serves on the Community Services and Government Affairs/Rules Legislative Committees. He remarked, "I have really enjoyed representing the Tribal Citizens every day. When we are on Capitol Hill asking for help, I am doing so as a Tribal Citizen. That is the way I feel, and when I am out at conventions, I am a Council Member representing Poarch. I try to present the best image I can for the Tribe and my people. It is so important to have representation in the State and Washington, DC. We are constantly fighting for our sovereignty and have come so close to a Carcieri fix. Hopefully, we will see that come to realization."

While discussing the Tribe's many blessings, Dewitt wants people to understand and remember there are those out there that are less fortunate than we are as a Tribe. He also added that it is important to research who they are donating to, as it shows good stewardship of the Tribe's money. This is something he takes very seriously and through the years Dewitt has been involved with various charities, giving his time and support to them. Even though some donations may not be popular with everyone, they are always in the best interest of the Tribe.

When we were finishing our conversation, I asked Dewitt if he had one last thought he wanted to share with everyone. He laughed and asked, "Just one?" Then he shared, "I think we always have to remember where we came from, how hard our elders worked to see us get to where we are, and to remember there are those less fortunate than we are. If I can help my friend or neighbor, I'm just a phone call away, and I'll be there." And, as the ole' cowboy saying goes, that is something you can hang your hat on.



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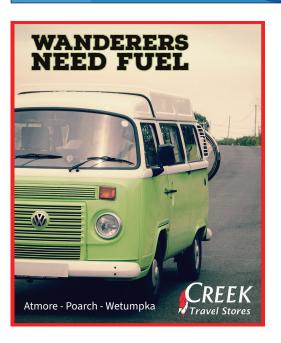
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BOYS & GIRLS CLUB

By Ashlee "Katie" Mothershed

Established in 2011, the Poarch Creek Indians Boys and Girls Club (BGC) began with a modest start on the PCI Pow Wow Grounds, staffed by just three dedicated individuals who served approximately 45 children. Today, the club has grown significantly, with around 470 enrolled members and a daily attendance ranging between 220 to 250 children. This growth is a testament to the BGC's commitment to providing a safe and supportive environment for the youth of the Poarch Creek community. In 2018, the BGC moved to its new home at the Poarch Creek Community Center, enabling it to expand its services and better cater to the needs of its members. Notably, the Poarch Creek Indians Boys and Girls Club is the only Native Boys and Girls Club in the state of Alabama, making it a unique and integral part of the community.

# **PROGRAMS AND SERVICES**

The PCI Boys & Girls Club serves four counties and collaborates with 13 schools to offer comprehensive programs for children aged 5 to 18. The BGC provides two main programs based on age groups: a K-6th grade program and a Teen Center program. To be eligible for these programs, children must either be Tribal Citizens, First or Second Generation Descendants, part of a Tribal household, or children of Tribal Government employees.

# After School Program

The After School program operates from 1:30 – 5:30 pm, providing a structured environment where children receive homework assistance, participate in recreational activities, and engage in social and emotional development programs. A hot meal is provided to all children upon arrival, ensuring they have the necessary nutrition to focus and engage in activities.

# **Break Period Program**

During school breaks, including summer, spring, winter, and fall, the BGC extends its hours from 7:30 am - 5:30 pm. During these extended hours, children are provided with breakfast, lunch, and a snack, maintaining the club's commitment to their well-being.



# Leadership and Mentorship

Leadership development is a core focus at the PCI Boys & Girls Club. The BGC offers two Leadership Clubs designed to nurture and enhance leadership skills among young members.

### Torch Club (Ages 11-13)

This club focuses on character development, leadership, and community service, providing preteens with opportunities to engage in meaningful projects and activities that benefit their community.

# Keystone Club (Teens)

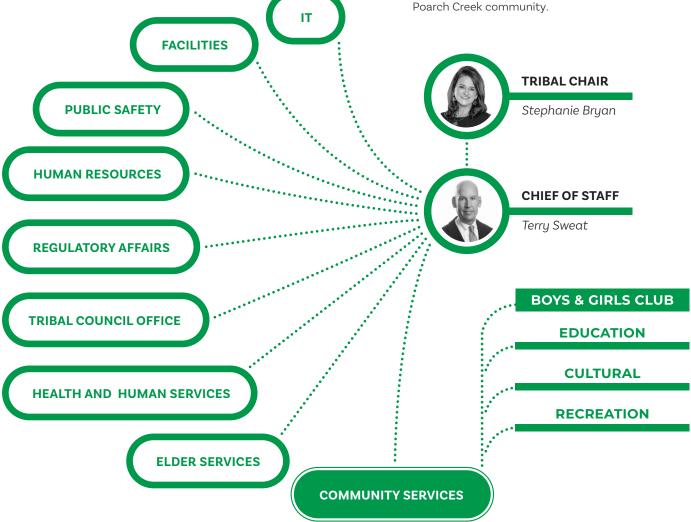
Aimed at teenagers, the Keystone Club provides older youth with leadership development experiences that focus on academic success, career preparation, and community service.

Additionally, the club has a Mentor Program designed to provide guidance, support, and positive role models for the youth. Mentors work closely with children, offering advice, sharing experiences, and helping them navigate their educational and personal development journeys.

# **COLLABORATION WITH TRIBAL DEPARTMENTS**

To provide a well-rounded experience, the BGC collaborates closely with various Tribal departments, including Education, Cultural, Environmental, and Recreation. These partnerships enable the BGC to offer a diverse range of programs and activities throughout the year, from educational workshops and cultural enrichment activities to environmental stewardship programs and recreational sports.

The PCI Boys & Girls Club plays a vital role in the community by offering a safe, nurturing, and educational environment for the youth. By focusing on academic support, leadership development, and cultural enrichment, the BGC ensures that every child has the opportunity to thrive and grow into a responsible, community-minded adult. The BGC's evolution from its humble beginnings to a comprehensive youth service organization reflects its dedication to fostering the growth and development of its members, ensuring a brighter future for the Poarch Creek community.



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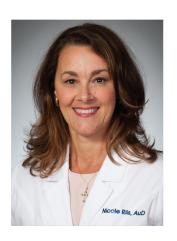


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Elizabeth Pickett, Au.D., CCC-A

Nicole Riis, Au.D., CCC-A, FAAA



By Jenna Kunze With Native News Online, Edited For Length

For more than a decade, nine sisters battled the South Dakota legislature for the right to sue the Catholic Church for sexual abuses they endured during the 1950s and '60s at an Indian boardina school the church operated. State lawmakers have denied these women and hundreds of other Native survivors of sexual abuses the right to sue, and some have died without receiving justice.

> WARNING-This story includes accounts of physical, mental. sexual and emotional abuse that survivors experienced in Indian boarding schools.

Imost every February for a decade, Charbonneau-Dahlen and her eight sisters donned their traditional Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa regalia, took deep breaths, and piled into cars to travel to the South Dakota Legislature in Pierre. In the state capitol building, the sisters told lawmakers year after year about the abuse they endured as children in the 1950s and '60s at the hands of priests, nuns, and staff at St. Paul's Indian Mission boarding school in Marty, South Dakota.

The sisters' accounts of molestation, rape. and even a forced abortion aligned with a larger picture of abuse painted by more than 100 other boarding-school students in lawsuits against the Catholic dioceses of Sioux Falls and Rapid City that began in 2003.

But those lawsuits were dismissed by the courts in 2010 as a result of a change in the law. Just days before the Charbonneau sisters and others were set to go to trial, the South Dakota Legislature approved a last-minute law to narrow the statute of limitations for child sex-abuse cases. The revised statute, passed by both houses and signed into law by Gov. M. Michael Rounds in March 2010, prohibits any victim who has reached the age of 40 from filing civil lawsuits against those responsible for their abuse or against institutions that knew or should have known about sexual abuse.

As a result, a South Dakota circuit court judge retroactively applied the revised statute of limitations to dismiss 18 pending boarding-school lawsuits, including the Charbonneau sisters' suit. The sisters appealed that decision, but the Supreme Court of South Dakota upheld it.

The 2010 revised statute was proposed

and written by Steven Smith, the defense attorney for the Congregation of the Priests of the Sacred Heart, the religious order that has run an Indian boarding school-St. Joseph's Indian School-in Chamberlain, South Dakota, since 1927. At the time, Smith was defending at least four active cases against priests who had worked at St. Joseph's, including Matthew Miles, who was convicted in the late 1980s for sodomizing young boys in Washington, D.C. Miles had worked at St. Joseph's in the 1970s, where he was accused of raping at least one student

After the Charbonneau sisters' cases were dismissed, they and some lawmakers rallied every year behind legislation that would either rescind the revisions to the statute of limitations law, or open a two-year window for victims of childhood sexual abuse to file lawsuits against the organizations responsible for the institutions where it occurred.

The Legislature blocked those bills each time. Lawmakers were swayed by testimony from lobbyists for the Catholic Church, insurance agencies, and Steven Smith. Opponents claimed that past abuse is "nearly impossible" to prove, that it would be "unfair to existing congregations of churchgoers" in the state to "defend and potentially pay a claim" for something that happened decades before, and that survivors are simply "reaching for the brass ring," according to audio recordings from almost a decade of legislative hearings.

Now, Charbonneau family members say that lawmakers' racism, ignorance, and blind support of the church has had its intended effect: Boarding-school survivors are aging, and some have died before ever getting their day in court.

"My mom always said, 'They're waiting for us to get old and die so they can forget all about this," Sarah Sharpe, Barbara Charbonneau-Dahlen's 40-year-old daughter, told Native News Online at her stepson's seventh birthday party in Grand Forks in February 2023. Her mother, who had become one of the driving forces behind the movement to repeal the revised statute of limitations, passed away suddenly in May 2021 at age 68 of health complications from long COVID. The year before, Louise, another sister active in the movement, had died of an aneurysm. A third sister, Laurette, died of cancer in the fall of 2021.

With the deaths of the most vocal of the Charbonneau sisters, along with grief and health complications stemming from their own traumas, the remaining six sisters have not brought new legislation forward since 2021. Instead, the next generation—their children—hope to take on the battle, though they are struggling to find their footing.

"It's our time to stand up and fight for them," Sharpe said. "Their voices were silenced, [which] is what South Dakota wants."

### THE BEFORE

[In 1950] Indian boarding schools were in full swing across the nation, as part of the federal government's 150-yearlong initiative to assimilate Native youth into dominant white society. These schools were "free" for families; they were paid for with federal funds generated by proceeds from cessions of Indian territories to the United States through treaties, the Federal Indian Boarding School Investigative Report writes.

By 1926, more than 80% of Indigenous youth across the country were enrolled in an Indian boarding school, according to the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition.

St. Paul's, opened in the village of Marty on the Yankton Sioux Reservation in 1924, was one of more than 500 Indian boarding schools operated or funded by the federal government through the late 1960s. Half were managed by Christian groups. St. Paul's was controlled by the Diocese of Sioux Falls—the diocese responsible for Catholic institutions in South Dakota east of the Missouri River-but staffed by different religious organizations, including Blue Cloud Abbey, Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, and Oblate Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament.

### THE DURING

At St. Paul's Mission-or "Marty," as former students colloquially call it— the Charbonneau sisters were separated by design. They were grouped in different dorm rooms by their ages, Mary Lou remembers. Her younger sisters would seek comfort from the older girls by sticking their fingers underneath the door to touch hands-until the nuns caught them and further separated the girls.

"You couldn't connect with your family. From the moment you got there, it was total segregation at Marty," Geraldine Charbonneau Dubourt, 75, said in a Pacifica Radio interview recorded in 2019. "They reinforced it by beatings, by strapping, by shaving heads; 'you'll go to hell, your parents will die, your parents will go to hell."

"We were all scared," Mary Lou told Native News Online of her first impression of boarding school. "We'd never been without Mom and Dad."

Mary Lou's only fond memory of school is of a classmate braiding her hair. By contrast, she has many memories that caused her to visibly tremble during our conversation. She recalls nuns wiping her face in her own urine when she wet the bed as a fourth grader. Later, she said one of the nuns would sexually abuse her by sticking a hand in her underwear, under the guise of checking if she had wet the bed. Her story matches the testimony she gave in her deposition 13 years ago, which was included in the joint lawsuit the nine sisters filed in October 2008 in the Second District Circuit Court in Sioux Falls.

At the time, Mary Lou felt alone in her abuse. It wasn't until decades later that she discovered she was not. Although each Charbonneau sister suffered physical, mental, emotional, and sexual abuses, they didn't share their experiences with one another until later in life, in part because they had blocked them out, she said.

Louise Charbonneau Aamot, who died in 2020, was the first sister to start having flashbacks, in the early 2000s. It was right around the time the sisters' mother passed away, when they ranged in age from their mid-40s to their late 50s. When they gathered at their parents' farm in Olga, Louise broached the topic for the first time. She asked her sisters: "Were any of you abused at Marty like I was?"

"When [Louise] said that out loud, it's like Pandora's box was open," Barbara (who died in 2021) recalled in the 2019 radio interview. Barbara described being in a "cocoon" until her fifties, when the memories the sisters-and many other abuse survivors-had spent decades pushing out came rushing back in. An awareness that they haven't been able to ignore or quell since flooded them.

All nine of the Charbonneau women recounted different memories of abuse in depositions My mom always said, 'They're waiting for us to get old and die so they can forget all about this' SARAH SHARPE

included in their 2008 lawsuit. In total, they named 12 nuns and priests in the suit, and mentioned several other clergy or staff members whose names they could not recall.

Three of the sisters, including Mary Lou, named the same nun, Sister Davidica, as their abuser, for incidents including breast fondling and requiring one of the girls to be naked while being spanked. Other sisters detailed abuse from other nuns and priests. Three of the girls reported a similar experience: a doctor with the Indian hospital who, "under the auspice of being checked for scoliosis" forced the girls "to strip completely naked, walk to one end of the room, and bend over."

... continued on next page

At 16, one of the Charbonneau sisters was raped and made pregnant by a priest at St. Paul's Indian School, she told Native News Online. This allegation wasn't listed in the lawsuit, though the sister has repeatedly testified to the Legislature about her rape.

Thinking she had the flu, she went to the school's infirmary, where nurses aborted her fetus and burned it in the incinerator, she said. "We were well used in every way," the sister said in her testimony. "They could, so they did."

## THE AFTER: 'A GREAT STATE FOR PEDOPHILES'

"I'd like you to look at me," Barbara Charbonneau-Dahlen told South Dakota lawmakers in 2012, the first year that a bill to rescind the revised statute of limitations was introduced in the House Judiciary Committee. "I could be your wife. I could be your aunt. I could be your sister. I could be your mother. Look at me and see that the trauma of childhood sexual abuse does not pick a time to remember."

Church and state-condoned abuse of Native American children at boarding school was not an experience unique to the Charbonneau sisters. For a 150-year period, federal policy was to remove Native children from their homes and send them to boarding schools, sometimes hundreds of miles away. There, they would be raised by priests and nuns under a mixed model of hard labor and "education" that used "systematic militarized and identity-alteration methodologies" to assimilate the youth into the dominant society, according to a federal investigation conducted by the Department of the Interior in 2022.

The preliminary report, published in May 2022, named

I could be your wife. I could be your aunt. I could be your sister. Look at me and see that the trauma of childhood sexual abuse does not pick a time to remember.

> BARBARA CHARBONNEAU-DAHLEN

the "rampant physical, sexual, and emotional abuse; disease; malnourishment; overcrowding; and lack of health care in Indian boarding schools," and found that at least 500 Native children had died at boarding schools. The report's author, Assistant Secretary of the Interior Bryan Newland (Bay Mills Indian Community), estimates that number will rise to the "tens of thousands" as the investigation continues.

Since the turn of the century, hundreds of childhood survivors of abuse at Indian boarding schools have filed lawsuits, seeking retribution for the sexual and physical abuse they endured at the hands of priests, nuns, and clergy entrusted with their care.

In 2011, more than 500 abuse victims-primarily Native American or Alaska Native-received one of the largest payouts ever from a religious order in U.S. history, when the

Jesuits in the Northwest agreed to pay them \$166 million in a bankruptcy settlement for abuses the former students endured from the priests and nuns who ran their boarding schools. That payment was in addition to \$25 million paid to 200 Indigenous claimants between 2001 and 2009.

As a term of the settlement, the Jesuits published a list of the priests who were "credibly accused" of sex abuse. That list shows what attorneys for the victims had argued: that Native American reservations and remote Native communities were used as "dumping grounds" for problem priests. Nearly half of all Jesuit priests and brothers credibly accused of sexual abuse against children in the western United States over the past 70 years worked in Indian Country.

While most states are expanding their laws to make it easier for survivors to seek justice against pedophiles, South Dakota is moving in the opposite direction.

Nearly every state has some basic suspension of the statute of limitations for civil actions on crimes against minors, because child victims frequently do not understand the relationship between the abuse and their psychological injuries resulting from that abuse until "well into adulthood," according to the National Center for Victims of Crime. By the time victims remember the sexual abuse and understand its relationship to their injuries, the ordinary statute of limitations will have already expired.

As a result of an onslaught of childhood sexual-abuse cases and coverups within organizations including the Catholic Church, the Boy Scouts of America, and the USA Gymnastics team, lawmakers over the last decade have begun extending when survivors can file civil actions for child sexual abuse, to accommodate "delayed discovery," or the idea that "emotional and psychological trauma and is often accompanied by repression of the memory of abuse."

Prior to 2010, South Dakota had no limits on when a survivor of childhood sexual abuse could bring a lawsuit against either the perpetrator or a "responsible entity" such as the Catholic Church.

But after the South Dakota legislature revised the law, adult survivors couldn't file suits after they reached age 40. The revised law also limits victims to suing individuals, rather than the entities they worked for. That presents an additional challenge in the cases of Indian boarding-school suits, as many abusers are now dead.

The age limit in the South Dakota law is out of step with a key factor influencing statute of limitations reform around the country. Most survivors of childhood sexual abuse do not disclose they were abused until they are adults, experts say. More than half of those who said they were abused while in the Boy Scouts did not disclose it until they were over 50, according to Child USA, a think tank dedicated to improving laws and public policy to end child abuse and neglect.

"I'm told that what we did in 2010 made South Dakota a great place for pedophiles," former Republican state representative Steve Hickey, now a pastor, told his fellow lawmakers in 2012 when he introduced legislation to repeal the revised statute of limitations law. "And that our state is heading fast in the exact opposite direction of every other state in terms of dealing with child sex abuse."

## 'IT IS UP TO THE COURT ... NOT THE LEGISLATURE'

Steven Smith—the Church's attorney responsible for the law change that resulted in the dismissal of the Charbonneau sisters' case — denies that the legislation he wrote has directly blocked victims from seeking justice in the courts.

Smith told Native News Online by phone that his law had "nothing to do with" the sisters' claim, because the state Supreme Court didn't dismiss the boarding-school cases based on the new statute directly, but instead chose to reevaluate the legislative intent of the Childhood Sex Abuse statute, and applied the one-year statute of limitations for personal-injury suits in South Dakota.

Asked about his motive, Smith said that he wrote the legislation because he had child sex-abuse claims coming in that he deemed "very suspect" for not aligning with the dates when the lone "bad actor" with substantial claims against him was at St. Joseph's. (Smith wouldn't identify this "bad actor," but prior testimony to the legislature indicates that he was referring to convicted priest Brother Miles.)

The additional "nebulous" cases detracted from those that might have been legitimate, Smith said. But his legislation blocked all Indian boarding-school abuse claims from going to court, including "justified claims," which is how he described the Charbonneau sisters' case.

"I have never denied that those sisters were abused. I fully believe that they were abused," Smith told Native News Online by phone. "When you have so many people whose claims were nebulous, at what point does that actually help individuals who may, in fact, have been negatively impacted? Those who may bring a justified claim would have to have their claims tossed into the [pile] with those just seeking a quick handout."

Greg Yates, who worked on cases naming nearly 100 plaintiffs who experienced childhood sex abuse in South Dakota, said that's not the whole story. All but two of those cases were dismissed before the victims could get their day in court, he said.

"Technically, Steven Smith is correct," Yates said. "But he went to the South Dakota legislature behind the backs of the victims who had pending cases and defamed them and their attorneys, inferring their claims were manufactured, which resulted in the passing of HB 1104. As a result... a flurry of motions to dismiss based upon that newly enacted statute was filed. Clearly, his behind-the-scenes legislative actions precipitated and was the impetus for the dismissal of almost 100 [plaintiffs] of childhood sex abuse at the boarding schools, based upon the statute of limitations."

The dismissal had the effect of the South Dakota legislature usurping the role of the state's justice department.

"It is up to the courts to sort out the merits of individual cases, not the legislature to determine which ones deserve

their day in court and which ones do not," Rep. Hickey said in his 2013 testimony to the House Judiciary Committee. "Additionally and respectfully, it is not our place as legislators to play psychologist and determine what repressed memories are reliable and which aren't."

Lawmakers' ignorance of the history and present-day effects of boarding schools was part of the problem in gaining any traction to reform the statute of limitations, former South Dakota legislator Kevin Killer, a former Oglala Lakota president, told Native News Online.

Killer introduced or cosponsored legislation to repeal or revise the statute of limitations five times, beginning in 2012. But restricted time limits for testimony and the difficulty of explaining the 150 years of boarding-school history that led survivors to the state capitol were just a few of the challenges, he said.

"The frustrating part about that was that [legislators] were actively learning about the [boarding school] history, but at the same time... this was the only place for these sisters to go to," Killer said, adding that the bill itself only got about 30 minutes of testimony from both sides. "Initially, this all should have been done in a court of law."

Mary Lou, who joined her sisters three times in Pierre to make their case before state legislators, said that she left feeling pissed off each time.

"It was like they didn't believe us," she said.

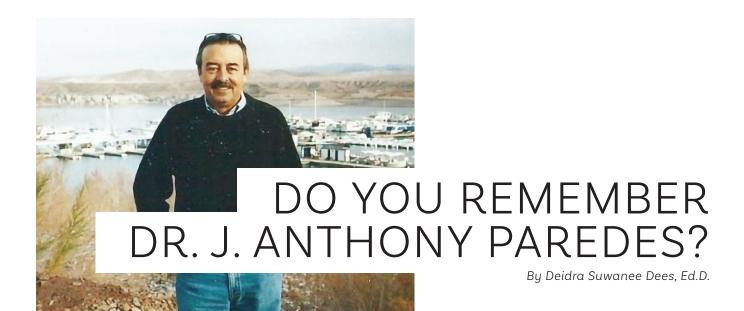
Mary Lou tries not to fret about the past. She told her husband and their children about her boarding-school experiences around 2010, when she came back home after testifying in court for the first time. She thought her husband wouldn't accept her, but was relieved when he reassured her that nothing she experienced as a child was her fault. She thought that by speaking her truths aloud for the first time, she could eventually bury them forever.

To date, no person or entity has ever taken responsibility for the horrors Mary Lou and her sisters endured as girls. Still, at 80 years old, Mary Lou still holds out hope. For her, healing would look like accountability. "Don't give me a dollar, just tell me you did it," she said.

"I would like apologies," Mary Lou said. "To acknowledge that they did evil. It won't ever be over until they do recognize it. I want it to be over."



Scan the QR code to read this article in its entirety. Or scroll to the bottom and click the link to read "Nine Little Girls - Part 2".





o you remember Dr. J. Anthony Paredes (1939-2013)? Perhaps you saw him stomp dancing with us at one of our Pow Wows. Perhaps he interviewed one of your relatives. Dr. Paredes is a person that Tribal Citizens should know about.

He was the quintessential researcher who worked with the Poarch Band of Creek Indians on a number of projects since 1971, including the Federal Recognition Petition and the interviewing of Tribal leaders. The audio recorded interviews are housed in the Office of Archives and Records Management.

While working in the Samuel Proctor Oral History Program at the University of Florida, he first contacted the Tribe in 1971 with a letter of introduction to Mr. Buford L. Rolin. He had read the important article about the Tribe by BIA Agent Dr. Frank G. Speck (1881-1950) titled, "Notes on Social and Economic Conditions Among the Creek Indians of Alabama in 1941." This article, housed in the Office of Archives and

Scan the OR code to hear these interviews at the Samual **Proctor Oral History** Program at the University of Florida.



Records Management, gave him the desire to document Tribal history. He requested to interview Tribal members to record the history of the Tribe from their perspectives.

The door was opened and he began his interviews in 1972. He interviewed Joyce McGhee, Roberta McGhee Sells, Houston McGhee, Jack Daughtry, and many others.

Paredes Dr. also interviewed former Chairman

Eddie L. Tullis whom he worked closely with during the Federal Recognition process. In a telephone interview with

Dr. Deidra Suwanee Dees on September 4, 2024, Chairman Tullis explained how helpful Dr. Paredes was. "We were told up front by the Office of Federal Acknowledgement that we needed academic work for our Petition. We did not have academically accepted work. We had work by attorneys, reporters, journalists, but not academic scholarship. We needed a whole lots more study and Tony filled that vacuum for us."

"He wrote about how we existed as a Tribe. He did research on Creek records in the Episcopal Church in Mobile. He was directly involved in putting the Petition together. Nobody questioned his work. He had high quality work. They wanted more than somebody to make a story," Tullis said.

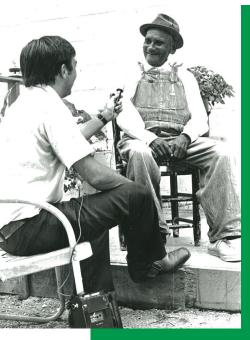
"This community did not readily accept people, but Tony was well accepted. He had the personality for it. He was sincerely interested in people. Elders felt comfortable with him. They told him things they wouldn't tell nobody else,"

"He was one of the community. He never missed a Pow Wow," Tullis added.

Dr. Paredes' widow, Alleen Deutsch Paredes, donated her husband's records to the Tribe after his passing. On November 26, 2015, she attended our Thanksgiving Pow Wow, as she and Dr. Paredes had done for a number of years. Tribal Chair Stephanie A. Bryan announced the acquisition to the crowd. "We are so thankful for the invaluable work that Dr. J. Anthony Paredes did that helped this Tribe achieve Federal Recognition. Words cannot express how thankful we are that his wife Ms. Alleen Deutsch Paredes made this donation of his papers to our Archives."

On her visit, Alleen Paredes toured the Office of Archives and Records Management which houses the Paredes Collection in the fireproof file cabinets. This was her first visit without her husband. Teary eyed, she requested a personal





PICTURED (top) Retired Chairman Eddie L. Tullis and Dr. J. Anthony Paredes (bottom) Dr. Paredes interviewing Isaac McGhee

**W**e are so thankful for **the invaluable** work that Dr. J. Anthony **Paredes did** that helped this Tribe achieve Federal Recognition.

> **POARCH CREEK INDIANS** TRIBAL CHAIR STEPHANIE A. BRYAN

picture of herself standing beside the fireproof cabinets that identified the papers inside: "Dr. J. Anthony Paredes Collection," which-through her heartfelt generosityshe had made possible.

In August of 2024, the research team, comprised of Dr. Deidra Suwanee Dees, Billy Bailey, and Emily Fayard, set out to find records at Oglethorpe University in Atlanta, Georgia that we did not have in our Archives. Some of his records were sent to the University by Alleen after his passing because Oglethorpe is where he obtained his academic degree and where he spent a lot time working with Alumni affairs.

Fayard said, "University Librarian Eli Arnold was extremely courteous and accommodating throughout our research visit at Oglethorpe University. He understood the importance of our research request to take Dr. Paredes' records home with us to our Archives. He generously donated the original records to us. We are very grateful for his hospitality and generosity."

The research team found a copy of the 1969 newspaper clipping from The Enterpriser showing Chief Calvin McGhee and Chief Dode McIntosh, Muscogee Nation, attending the Creek Reunion at Florala. The researchers found 1832 land documents written in English which, woefully, dispossessed Creeks of their land with the marking of X for the signatory. While some Creeks were fluent in English at that time, many others could not read, write, or speak the English language. Now, we have the documentation showing the misuse of the system to manipulate Creeks out of their land.

Bailey said, "We found good transcriptions of notes from the Southeastern Symposium; a large part of it was Eddie Tullis speaking. We found information specifically about our Tribe, our churches. The trip was well worth it. We found a lot of documents the Tribe didn't have before. Now we are ready to go to the

next area to do research."

In addition to conducting valuable research, from 1993 to 1995, Dr. Paredes served as the president of the Society for Applied Anthropology (SfAA), a prestigious scientific organization founded in 1941. He shared his research on the Tribe with the membership through documentary sources and through a 2012 interview by the Society. This interview took place one year prior to his passing.

The late SfAA Executive Director, Dr. J. Thomas May, invited those who worked with Dr. Paredes to give a presentation honoring him at their annual conference on March 25, 2015 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Dr. Deidra Scan the QR code below to access Dr. Paredes' interview with the Society for Applied Anthropology.



Suwanee Dees, Robert Thrower, Dr. Kelley Fayard, and Dr. Peggy Overby (his former student) gave a heartfelt presentation at the conference on the significance of Dr. Paredes' work. They told the audience that Dr. Paredes' interviews from the 1970s lived on in our present-day community through programs such as our annual History Conference and Evening with the Elders.

As the Conference Program stated, this group of panelists demonstrated "how the extensive anthropological work of Dr. Paredes has long-ranging influence on the Tribe's archival acquisition expansion, Museum exhibit development, and historic Picture Book publication."

The presentation was well-attended and was well-received. The audience and conference leadership provided positive feedback to the presenters after the panel ended. Dr. May said, "I think Dr. Paredes and the Tribe was well served by this panel."

Leaders in attendance from other tribes told the panelists that incorporating Dr. Paredes' recordings into our programs was a model on which they could follow in their own communities. They stressed how important Dr. Paredes' work was that captured Tribal voices which live on throughout time.

The SfAA is planning to host another presentation about Dr. Paredes at their next conference in 2025. Researcher and THPO, Billy Bailey, Jr., Brandy Chunn, and Dr. Kelly Fayard will give a new presentation documenting the ways that Dr. Paredes' work is still used today. Because of his far-reaching work, Dr. Paredes is a man that everyone should remember MVTO.

# 1983-1984 TRIBAL COUNCIL POARCH CREEK INDIANS



Willis McGhee, Jr.





Alex "Jody" Martin



J. W. "Billy" Smith

Dottie C. Padgett

Ronnie Smith



John A. McGhee

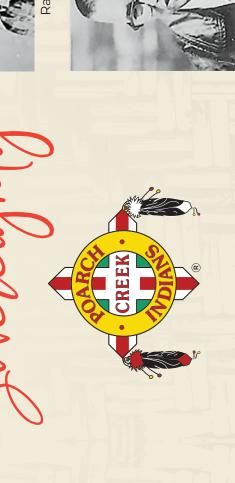


Cathy Carpenter



THE ROAD TO





Ronnie Jackson



**Eddie Tullis** 







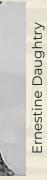


Buford L. Rolin











Dale Gehman

Garry McGhee

Susan Wicker

Gene Rackard



**Hubert Rackard** 



ative Americans are often generalized into one group without the acknowledgement that the term "Native American" encompasses 574 federally recognized tribes in the United States alone. However, because of this generalization,

historical and cultural educators have had to work diligently to unravel popular ideals about Indigenous people. This includes everything from what a Native American looks like to what they wear for clothing to what they live in.

This month, I reached out to PCI's Cultural Education Coordinator Justin "Bobo" Rolin to help us understand traditional Mvskoke Creek lodging and how it differs from that of other Tribes. He had a lot to share on this important subject and started by explaining long houses and teepees.

Long houses were dwellings used by northeastern tribes such as the Powhatan, Haudenosaunee, Wyandot, and others. Not only were they used for community gatherings, but they also provided housing for multiple families.

Teepees were mobile, fast to set up and breakdown, and used among nomadic tribes who moved from place to place quickly following their food source. Typically, teepees would be found in the great plains region among the Blackfoot, Cheyenne, Comanche and Lakota tribes, just to name a few. Over time, mainstream media's consistent use of teepees led to the belief that all Indigenous people lived in teepees, which is incorrect. This is why it is important for us Mvskoke Creek people to understand and know about our own culture and history and steer away from stereotypical ideals.

The truth is that Southeastern Indigenous people DID NOT live in teepees. We did, however have our own version of a teepee from an efficiency standpoint. While it wasn't coneshaped like a teepee, Mvskoke hunting camps or lean-to's were shelters that were quick and easy to set up. They were especially used on our hunting trips. The hunting camp was made by laying a horizontal limb or a trunk of a small tree on to a sturdier tree. Then, we would place several other limbs that would go from the ground to the horizonal piece. After that we would add moss, leaves, or bark on top to help shield us from the rain and sun.

Our people were agriculturalist and hunters. We lived in a place that was, and still is, booming with wildlife everywhere. Our soil was exceptional for growing vegetables and fruits. With this, we didn't have to move around a lot to hunt or gather for food. We could just simply stay where we were and go in our backyard to hunt and harvest what we needed.

With that being said, our Mvskoke people constructed two different styles of homes. One was called a summer home and the other was a winter home. But why two? I'm glad you



PICTURED Traditional Myskoke hunting camp. Untitled sketchbook page by Philipp Georg Friedrich von Reck (c 1736).



PICTURED Wattle and daub style Creek home

asked. Our summer homes were built with no walls and just a roof similar to an open pole barn that you would see today. Why is that? Well, here in the south our summers can get very hot and humid. At that time, our people didn't have air conditioners like we do today. So, the open-air concept was a critical necessity to staying cool.

Our second style was the winter home, better known as a "wattle and daub" home. These homes were constructed by weaving river cane back and forth to create the frame of the home. When that was done, we would get some clay and grass and mix them together to make a strong brick-like material. We then would "daub" the material into the woven frame to make the walls insulated to keep us warm during our winter months. The roofs of the homes would be made from thatched straw.

During the mid-1700s through the early 1800s, Creeks began to adopt horizontal log architecture. The Creeks lived in simple log cabins with earthen floors and stick and mud chimneys, and they used a fireplace or outdoor fire pit for cooking.

Our ancestors, just like those of other Tribes, used the resources they had around them to eat, clothe themselves, put a roof over their head, and ultimately survive.

If you are enjoying these articles and want to learn more about the Myskoke Creek culture and history, please make sure you are staying in touch with the Cultural department through The Roundhouse. We regularly host classes, cultural nights, and much more. We'd love to have you join us as we learn together and continue our legacy as Myskoke people.

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By Ashlee "Katie" Mothershed



haring Our Stories of Survival is a crucial read for understanding the social and legal issues surrounding violence against Native women in the U.S. This compelling collection brings together voices from various fields-law, social work, social sciences, literature, and the victims themselves—to expose the harsh realities these women face.

Native women suffer violence at higher rates than any other group, enduring everything from rape and battery to more subtle forms of abuse. The stories and case studies in this book are raw and often painful, backed by grim statistics that highlight the need for urgent action. But beyond documenting these hardships, the book also showcases the incredible resilience and strength of the survivors.

The contributors make it clear that the violence faced by Native women is human violence, meaning it can be stopped with effort and education. The first step is acknowledging the truth, which this book courageously does.

Sharing Our Stories of Survival is not just a collection of narratives; it's a call to action. It's essential reading for anyone committed to understanding and combating the violence against Native women.

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.



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Dec 4	Prague	Czech Beer Tasting		
Dec 5	Prague	Hotel Check-Out Prague to Nuremberg Transfer Nuremberg Christmas Markets		
	Nuremberg	RIVER CRUISE EMBARKATION		
Dec 6	Nuremberg	Nuremberg City Tour & Christmas Markets OR Nuremberg Christmas Markets OR Tastes of Franconia		
Dec 7	Regensburg	Regensburg Walking Tour and Thurn & Taxis Christmas Markets OR Thurn & Taxis Christmas Markets OR Tastes of Bavaria and Thurn & Taxis Christmas Markets OR Regensburg Guided Bike Tour		
Dec 8	Passau	Passau Walking Tour & Christmas Markets OR River Inn Bike Tour OR Salzburg Excursion & Christmas Markets		
Dec 9	Melk	Benedictine Abbey Tour OR Danube Bike Tour		
	Vienna	OR Evening Vienna Rathaus Christmas Market		
Dec 10	Vienna	"Imperial Vienna" Tour & Christmas Markets OR Vienna City Tour by Bike Schönbrunn Christmas Markets		
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By Kristin Hellmich

f you know about Magnolia Branch Wildlife Reserve, you may be tempted to keep it a secret. Hidden away in the dense forests just north of the Poarch Creek Indian Reservation. Magnolia Branch offers a tranquil escape into nature. But there's more to this place than just its natural beauty. It stands as a living testament to the resilience and enduring spirit of the Poarch Creek Indians, who reclaimed and revitalized this vast piece of sacred land.

Today, the reserve isn't just a sanctuary for wildlife. It's a living monument to the Poarch Creek Indians' journey of survival and resurgence. Spanning over 900 acres, the reserve provides a diverse ecosystem, from hardwood forests and wetlands to open meadows. The natural landscape of Magnolia Branch Wildlife Reserve is wonderfully varied. It features pitcher plant bogs, which host several species of carnivorous plants, and habitats for endangered butterflies. The Poarch Creek Indians actively engage in environmental stewardship, ensuring the land stays vibrant and bountiful.

One person who takes that stewardship personally is Tracy Sells. The Tribe bought the land in 2004, and Tracy was there when it opened to the public in 2006. Now managed by the Tribe's Natural Resources Department, Magnolia Branch welcomes more than 30,000 visitors each year. While the Natural Resources Department was formed in 2017, its roots go back hundreds of years to the Tribe's beginnings in Alabama. Respecting natural resources and sharing them with neighbors is an integral part of the Poarch Creek Indians' tradition.

Tracy Sells is more than just the Manager of Magnolia Branch Wildlife Reserve; she is its heart and soul. Her journey with the reserve began at its inception, and over the years, she has become deeply intertwined with its growth and development. "When we first started, it was tribal elder Billy

Smith's vision-a dream of what this land could become again," Tracy recalls. "Now, seeing families enjoy the trails, children learning about nature, and people finding peace here, it's beyond fulfilling."

Prior to PCI repurchasing the land, it had been held in private hands for more than a century. This was the case for many Native American lands once European settlers moved into North America. Once a vibrant gathering place along the banks of Big Escambia Creek, cherished by generations of Creek people, this area eventually fell silent and sat dormant for years, to be enjoyed only by friends and family of the private owners. Today, Tracy Sells envisions improvements that will make the most remote parts of the landscape accessible to visitors from around the country. She sees a footbridge crossing the creek, leading to spectacular views that may not have been enjoyed for decades. While current improvements have made all sorts of recreational opportunities available to visitors, she also understands that overdevelopment could compromise the site's natural beauty.

"Finding the balance is key," Tracy explains. "We want people to experience the beauty and history of Magnolia Branch, but we also need to protect it. It's a delicate dance between making the reserve accessible and preserving its pristine condition." This philosophy guides every decision made at the reserve, from the maintenance of hiking trails to the introduction of new recreational activities.

Tracy leads a small team that is passionate about preserving nature and making it accessible for all. They do everything from maintaining the hiking trails to keeping the horse stable and camping areas clean. "It's a team effort," she emphasizes. "Everyone here cares deeply about this land and what it represents. We're not just working; we're honoring the cultural heritage of the Tribe."



Under Tracy's leadership, the reserve has flourished. Visitors can enjoy a myriad of activities including boating, fishing, hiking, bird watching, horseback riding, and camping. "We see families come back year after year, and it's wonderful to watch their kids grow up exploring these same woods and streams." Tracv savs with a smile. "We've even had local churches hold baptisms in Big Escambia Creek, continuing traditions that date back generations for Creek people along these banks."

One of the most popular attractions at Magnolia Branch is the network of horse trails. "The horse trails are something special," Tracy notes. "Riding through these woods, you really get a sense of the history and the beauty of this land. It's a different kind of connection with nature." The reserve also boasts a well-maintained stable, ensuring that riders and the horses they bring have a comfortable and enjoyable experience.

For those who prefer water-based activities, Magnolia Branch offers canoeing and kayaking, both available for rent, on Big Escambia Creek. "There's something incredibly peaceful about being on the water," Tracy says. "Paddling along the creek, surrounded by nature, it's easy to forget the worries of everyday life."

Camping at Magnolia Branch is another favorite. The reserve provides facilities for both tent campers and RV travelers.



"

Finding the balance is key. We want people to experience the beauty and history of Magnolia Branch, but we also need to protect it. It's a delicate dance between making the reserve accessible and preserving its pristine condition.

> TRACY SELLS, MANAGER OF **MAGNOLIA BRANCH** WILDLIFE RESERVE



"Our campgrounds are well-equipped, and we welcome everyone, from seasoned campers to those trying it for the first time," Tracy explains. "We even see snowbirds stopping by in their RVs on the way to the beach, taking a break to enjoy the tranquility here."

Tracy's passion for Magnolia Branch is infectious. Her dedication to preserving this natural haven while making it accessible for others is evident in every aspect of the reserve. "This land tells a story," she reflects. "It's a story of resilience, of connection to the earth, and of community. We're here to make sure that story continues for future generations."

Through their dedication to preserving their ancestral land and sharing their rich cultural legacy, the Poarch Creek Indians invite all who visit to partake in a story of resilience and reverence for nature. Whether you're hiking, horseback riding, canoeing, or simply soaking in the serene landscapes, every visit to Magnolia Branch Wildlife Reserve is a journey through both nature and history. Tracy Sells and her team are the guardians of this remarkable place, ensuring it remains a sanctuary for all who seek solace and inspiration in its beauty.



# \$24 MILLION FOR MAJOR INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT

By Kristin Hellmich

he Poarch Creek Indians were recently awarded \$24 million from the U.S. Department Transportation's Federal Highway Administration as part of an initiative by the Biden-Harris Administration to invest in transportation improvements to infrastructure and road safety on Federal and Tribal Lands. The Poarch Creek Indians have also agreed to match 10% of funds awarded to further aid in this significant project.

Funds awarded will be used toward a major improvement project to Jack Springs Road in Escambia County, Ala. Funds will allow for an upgrade to the highly trafficked roadway, which will consist of converting a dirt road to a paved road with wider lanes and shoulders, as well as for resurfacing, road expansion, the installation of sidewalks and shoulder rumble strips, and intersection improvements.

The project, estimated to begin summer of 2025, is multifaceted and will take three to five years to complete. The area covers Jack Springs Road from I-65 north to Booneville Crossroads, covering approximately 8 miles across three rural roads that lead into, through, and out of the Poarch Creek Reservation.

Currently, there are numerous public safety concerns for this area. Lack of shoulders, and adequate lane width, particularly for the high volume of semi-truck traffic, are all factors to be addressed. Improvements will include new roadway reflectors on centerline and edge lines, improved curve delineation with reflective tape, and dual incorporation of wildlife warning and speed limit signs that will flash during times of high activity such as deer crossings. The long-term vision of the Tribe is to aid in improving Jack Springs Road to Atmore, and Tribal leaders are still actively seeking multiple federal funding sources to address those concerns in the future.

Further multimodal improvements include adding sidewalk sections connecting existing sidewalks and adding crosswalks with enhanced visibility signs and flashing beacons connecting the Pow Wow grounds to residential areas and Tribal facilities.

Once funds are received, The Tribe will begin to submit requests for proposals and follow the Federal procurement process for contract awards.

> For more information and the stay up-to-date on the project, visit poarchcreekindians.org.



**OCTOBER** 

5

12

13 & 20

19

19

26

27 & 31

Halloween at OWA's

Halloween at OWA's

**AHA Heart** 

Halloween at OWA's

Halloween at OWA's

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# THE 37th ANNUAL ALABAMA COASTAL CLEANUP

By Kristin Hellmich

he Poarch Creek Indians are once again the title sponsor for this year's Alabama Coastal Cleanup event to be held on Saturday, September 21. Alabama Coastal Cleanup is the state's largest annual volunteer event and is a project of Alabama People Against A Littered State (ALPALS). The organization is dedicated to making the state more beautiful by sponsoring programs focused on keeping Alabama waterways clean of debris that travels through storm drains, streams, and rivers, eventually becoming bay and gulf pollution. The Poarch Creek Indians are dedicated to the program and have served for multiple years, helping clean up litter in Alabama's streets, streams, and coastlines.

"Alabama PALS and Alabama Coastal Cleanup are proud of our relationships, friendships, and partnerships with the Poarch Creek Indians," said Spencer Ryan, Executive Director of Alabama PALS. "The genuine stewardship of PCI is indicated through the ongoing Title Sponsorship of the Alabama Coastal Cleanup, as well as many other working partnerships throughout the year," Ryan added. "To me, PCI represents what can be accomplished through longterm partnerships between active non-profits, government agencies, local and statewide businesses, and grass-roots volunteer efforts. PALS and the Alabama Coastal Cleanup look forward to the future of this wonderful and successful partnership".

As part of their involvement, the Poarch Creek Indians youth leadership club known as The Keystone Club, is volunteering to help "Get the Trash out of the Splash" of Alabama's coastal waterways and beaches. "Since 2017 we have partnered with ALPALS and the Alabama Coastal Cleanup project. Participating in this event provides a great learning experience for our youth and a great opportunity to earn community service hours," said Donna Koehrsen, Manager of Youth Development for the Poarch Creek Indians.

"The youth were so proud to clean up the beaches after the first year, that they could not wait to do it again. It is such a great cause and has turned out to be one of the Keystone Club's favorite events," said Koehrsen.

Volunteering to help this great cause, provides opportunity to see firsthand the impact that everyone can have on the environment and how we are responsible for what is left behind. Every plastic bottle and straw picked up is a reminder to stop littering, reduce waste, and recycle to help stop pollution of our environment.

66

The youth were so proud to clean up the beaches after the first year, that they could not wait to do it again. It is such a great cause and has turned out to be one of the Keystone Clubs's favorite events.

**DONNA KOEHRSEN** MANAGER OF YOUTH **DEVELOPMENT AT PCI** 

The Alabama Coastal Cleanup is part of the International Coastal Cleanup to remove marine debris from coastal Since 1987, over 110,000 waters around the world. volunteers have participated in the Alabama Coastal Cleanup and removed over 875 tons of marine debris from beaches, roadways, bayous, backwaters, and other coastal areas.

In addition to supporting this event each year, the Poarch Creek Indians operate the PCI Recycling Center located at 4449 Highway 21 South, Atmore, Alabama. This public facility collects plastic bottles, mixed and shredded paper, aluminum cans, cardboard, electronics, toner/ink, fluorescent light bulbs, and empty/rinsed pesticide containers.





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# WIND CREEK VISITS MUSIKFEST IN F

SERVES AS TITLE SPONSOR

By Amelia Tognoli

n the heart of Bethlehem, PA, Musikfest is the country's largest, non-gated music festival. This year, Wind Creek Hospitality served as the festival's title sponsor and assisted with volunteer efforts.

Located near Wind Creek Bethlehem, Musikfest has served as an eagerly awaited event for locals, out-of-state attendees, and everyone in between.

The 10-day festival boasted over 500 performances across 17 stages and close to 50 vendors including food, beverage, merchandise, and more. Musikfest's largest stage, known as the Wind Creek Steel Stage, hosted the festival's ticketed headlining acts.

For the past two years, Wind Creek Hospitality's branded gaming trailer has made an appearance for festivalgoers to engage with. The trailer is an exciting promotional tool at events and concerts-offering attendees a unique opportunity to interact with the Wind Creek brand and win prizes.

"Our gaming trailer is always a highlight for Guests," said Trina Rackard, Director of Sponsorships and Events at Wind Creek Hospitality.

"This year, festivalgoers enjoyed our newly renovated trailer, complete with air conditioning and an interactive interior prize wheel."

Festival goers enjoyed spinning the wheel and snapping selfies with Wind Creek Hospitality's mascot, Lucky Bill.

Wind Creek Bethlehem Team Members also assisted with volunteer efforts including helping attendees navigate the venue and answer fest-related inquiries.

"As a proud sponsor, we were thrilled to champion Musikfest again," Rackard said. "The festival is always one for the books and our Team Members enjoyed engaging with Wind Creek Bethlehem's community plus attendees from across the country."

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This year, festivalgoers enjoyed our newly renovated trailer, complete with air conditioning and an interactive interior prize wheel.

TRINA RACKARD **DIRECTOR OF SPONSORSHIP AND EVENTS AT WIND** CREEK HOSPITALITY

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# Starting a Business?

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Growing Alabama's Economy, One Small Business at a Time



By Catherine Hasty

s the crisp air of Fall sets in, join us for a month filled with festive delights at OWA Parks & Resort! All month long, enjoy a variety of activities, from live entertainment to spooky Halloween family-friendly fun, there's something for everyone this season.

Kick off the festivities with Oktoberfest on Saturday, October 5, with all day activities. Downtown OWA will come alive with German-inspired fun throughout the day. Start with "Foley Sister Cities, 5K Oktoberfest Run" at 9:00 AM-run, walk, or cheer on participants as they raise funds for a great community cause. Following the 5K, enjoy a variety of free Oktoberfest-themed activities, including live music, dancing, games, and crafts, starting at noon and continuing until the evening. Don't forget to don your dirndl or lederhosen for a full day of festive enjoyment!

As we move into the month, Downtown OWA will be decked out in Halloween-themed activities and entertainment every weekend! Enter your furry friend in the Howl-o-ween Dog Costume Contest on Saturday, October 12, and then come dressed in your own costume for our Monster Bash Costume Contest on October 26. Prizes will be awarded in various categories for pups, kids, and adults! HalGLOWeen is back for the 2nd year a free glow

party extravaganza in Downtown OWA. Plus, enjoy trick-ortreating throughout Downtown OWA on October 26, 27, and 31. Finally, back by fearful demand, Nightmare Chambers haunted select dates throughout the month! Check out VisitOWA.com for dates and times.

Saturday, October 19, the American Heart Association's Baldwin Heart Walk will take place at OWA starting at 9am. Funds raised from this event will go to support groundbreaking heart research, awareness and advocacy. Enjoy the great outdoors with friends and family while strengthening your heart muscles and contributing to a great cause. We'd love to have you walk with us. Take the steps to register your team today at BaldwinHeartWalk.org.

Prepare for unforgettable nights of talent and spooky shows at the OWA Theater! First, experience Halloween like no other as MJ The Illusion: A Michael Jackson Thriller Tribute takes over OWA Theater on Friday, October 4! From the moment you step through the doors, the atmosphere will transport you to an era where the King of Pop reigned supreme featuring unforgettable hits like "Thriller," "Smooth Criminal," "Billie Jean," and many more. Then, ROCK OUT as Back-N-Black brings the ultimate AC/DC experience back to OWA Theater stage on October 12th! This tribute delivers a powerhouse performance with a setlist of all your



favorites. PLUS, OWA Halloween 4D Movie Nights are back on October 25, 26, & 31. So, grab your popcorn, brave souls, and join OWA Theater for a cinematic adventure that will leave you screaming for more.

If "spooky season" isn't your thing, there's plenty more to enjoy at Brandon Styles Theater! From captivating Variety Shows to mind-bending Magic and Hypnosis, there's something for everyone. Join Brandon every Tuesday and Saturday this month for a night of laughter and amazement, featuring comedy, magic, and 60 spot-on impressions in his Variety Show. Looking for dinner and a show? Take a trip Down Memory Lane on October 2 with a special dinner performance. And if you love a good mystery, be sure to catch his Murder Mystery Show on Wednesday, October 4!

Keep up with the latest news on events, entertainment, and activities via our website at VisitOWA.com or by following us on social media @VisitOWA.









# CONGRATULATIONS

# KIMBERLY GREGSON IS NAMED ONE OF MOBILE BAY MAGAZINE'S 2024 WONDER KIDS

# Excerpt from the article By Emmett Burnett:

## WHY SHE ROCKS

A member of the Poarch Creek Indians, honor student and college-level paleontologist, Kimberly brings the past to present. She examines yesteryear's millenniums but also conducts cancer research as an intern with a University of South Alabama's genetics lab. In addition, Kimberly has presented her research at the Alabama Academy of Sciences Conference at Jacksonville State University.

### **FOSSIL FUELED**

"Paleontology is like a mystery from millions of years ago," Kimberly notes about the science she loves. "You place the pieces together to solve a mystery. It is so much fun." Kimberly serves as her school's Paleontology Collections Manager and is responsible for identifying and cataloging thousands of fossil specimens from plants to dinosaurs.

### **FUTURE PLANS**

Kimberly plans to study wildlife biology at Auburn University. She hopes to continue working in a research focused environment.

# **BIGGEST INFLUENCE**

Among Kimberly's influencers are Dr. Andrew Gentry, biologist and paleontologist. "He updated us with his research and any new discoveries, including a specimen coming to ASMS!" She also credits mom and dad. "They are the hardest working people I know," she adds. "They taught me if I wanted something, I had to work for it. Having that mindset influenced me to push through hardships to accomplish my goals."



# Thank you for your support.

# THE FAMILY OF DOUGLAS MARTIN,

Would like to send our heartfelt appreciation for all the flowers, food, love and support shown during my father's passing. A special thanks to Charlotte Meckel, Sandy Hollinger and Keith Martin for all your help.

With much love, Leasha, Walker and Elijah Martin



# IN LOVING MEMORY OF Jake Orvan Bailey

n November 20, 2020, this husband, father, son, brother, cousin & nephew was taken from us all too soon. His void is an irrevocable loss in all our lives. Jake's laughter was infectious-no doubt that everyone at Poarch has a Jake Bailey story. As Jake's children-Kadence, Poarcha, and Elijah-grow I see parts of Jake through them-his laughter, tears, strength, creativity, natural artistry for drawing/painting/carpentry, self-motivation, hunting/fishing acumen, athleticism, and pure love.

Jake sent me a video he recorded once -Jake would do that you see-have deep thoughts late at night about God, Jesus, heaven, his family and friends. Jake would call and check on you-make sure you were always ok-because he had true heart. Here are Jake's words:

"If you hold too many grudges in life you won't be where you're supposed to be in life, when you go to heaven." JAKE ORYAN BAILEY

Please let Jake's words resonate with you-tell those you love that love them. Let the past go, forgive trespasses, and show Jesus's compassion to others. Don't let your love ones leave without knowing how much you care- each day is a gift from God - treasure every moment.

With love to you all, Liesl Bailey, Kadence, Poarcha & Elijah



The Poarch Band of Creek Indians TERO department has joined with the Alabama Small Business Development Center out of the University of Alabama to provide free quarterly seminars called Building Your Business in '24. The series will include seminars on planning, financing, starting, and marketing your business. Those wanting to move faster can receive no cost assistance from the ASBDC by registering at asbdc.org.

# **PLANNING**

March 5, 2024 | 11:00am-1:00pm

# FINANCING

May 7, 2024 | 11:00am-1:00pm

August 20, 2024 | 11:00am-1:00pm

October 29, 2024 | 11:00am-1:00pm

TO REGISTER, email Jennifer Reynolds at jreynolds@pci-nsn.gov. All seminars will be held online and in-person at Building 200, First Floor Conference Room.





Government Relations and Public Affairs Office

5811 Jack Springs Road Atmore, AL 36502



10.1	SUBMISSION DEADLINE November Issue	
10.3	TRIBAL COUNCIL MEETING TC Chambers	4:00 PM
10.5	ELECTRONIC RECYCLING EVENT Fire Station #1   Jack Springs Road, Atmore, AL	8:00 AM-12:00PM
10.5	COMMEMORATING FORTY YEARS OF SOVEREIGNTY Wind Creek Atmore   Coosawada Ballroom	8:00 AM-3:00PM
10.7-10.8	MUSEUM CLOSED Inventory	
10.14	GOVERNMENT OFFICES CLOSED Indigenous Peoples' Day	
10.17	TRIBAL COUNCIL MEETING TC Chambers	4:00 PM