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2025

No. 45

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE of the POARCH CREEK INDIANS

creek corner

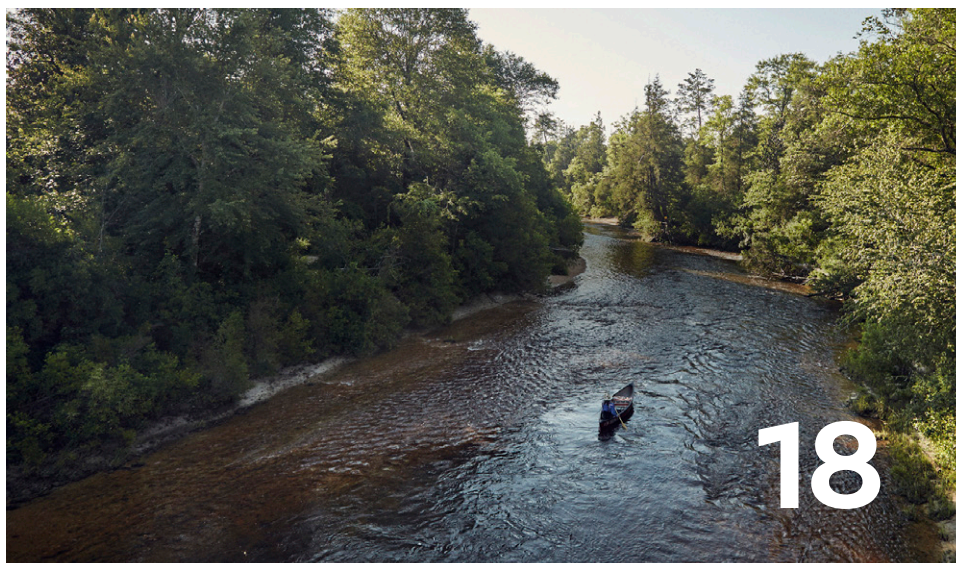
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MEGAN ZAMORA
Editor, Creek Corner

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

“

S

eptember always carries a certain energy. It marks the start of a new school year, a change in season, and, for many of us, a reminder to pause and prepare. Personally, this month has been a whirlwind. Between battling a stomach virus and food poisoning in the same week, sending my baby girl off to 2K, preparing for the State of the Tribe, and presenting my first budget to the executive committee, I've felt like I've been running on fumes.

And yet, in the middle of the chaos, I was able to attend the Inaugural Leadership Graduation—celebrating sixteen members of our health clinic team who completed their program. Witnessing their commitment to grow as leaders reminded me why our work matters so much. September is recognized as both National Preparedness Month and National Childhood Cancer Awareness Month, observances that call us to be ready for challenges and to support one another through them. At Poarch, I see that same spirit of resilience and community in action every day.

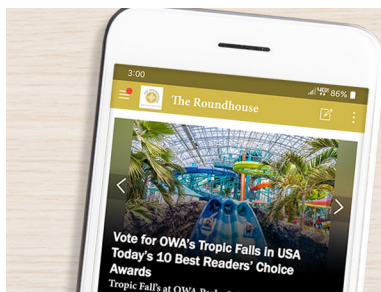
What we do here is truly top-notch. Whether it's leadership training, health care, education, or the countless other ways our programs serve Tribal Citizens, I continue to be amazed by the excellence and dedication of our people. Even when life feels like madness, it's a madness worth being proud of.

As the season shifts and we move toward autumn, I feel an overwhelming sense of optimism. I've seen glimpses of so many areas of our Tribe, and each one tells the same story: we are growing, we are thriving, and we are preparing for an even brighter future together.

I've shared some of the reasons I'm proud to be Poarch—now I'd love to hear from you. Send me an email (mzamora@pci-nsn.gov) and let me know why you are proud to be Poarch. Be sure to include your name, roll number, and best contact information, and put in the subject line: Proud to be Poarch. You never know, your feedback might just find its way into a future issue.

“

...I continue to be amazed by the excellence and dedication of our people. Even when life feels like madness, it's a madness worth being proud of.



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QUESTIONS?

Contact Sharon Delmar at KGreen@pci-nsn.gov.





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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.

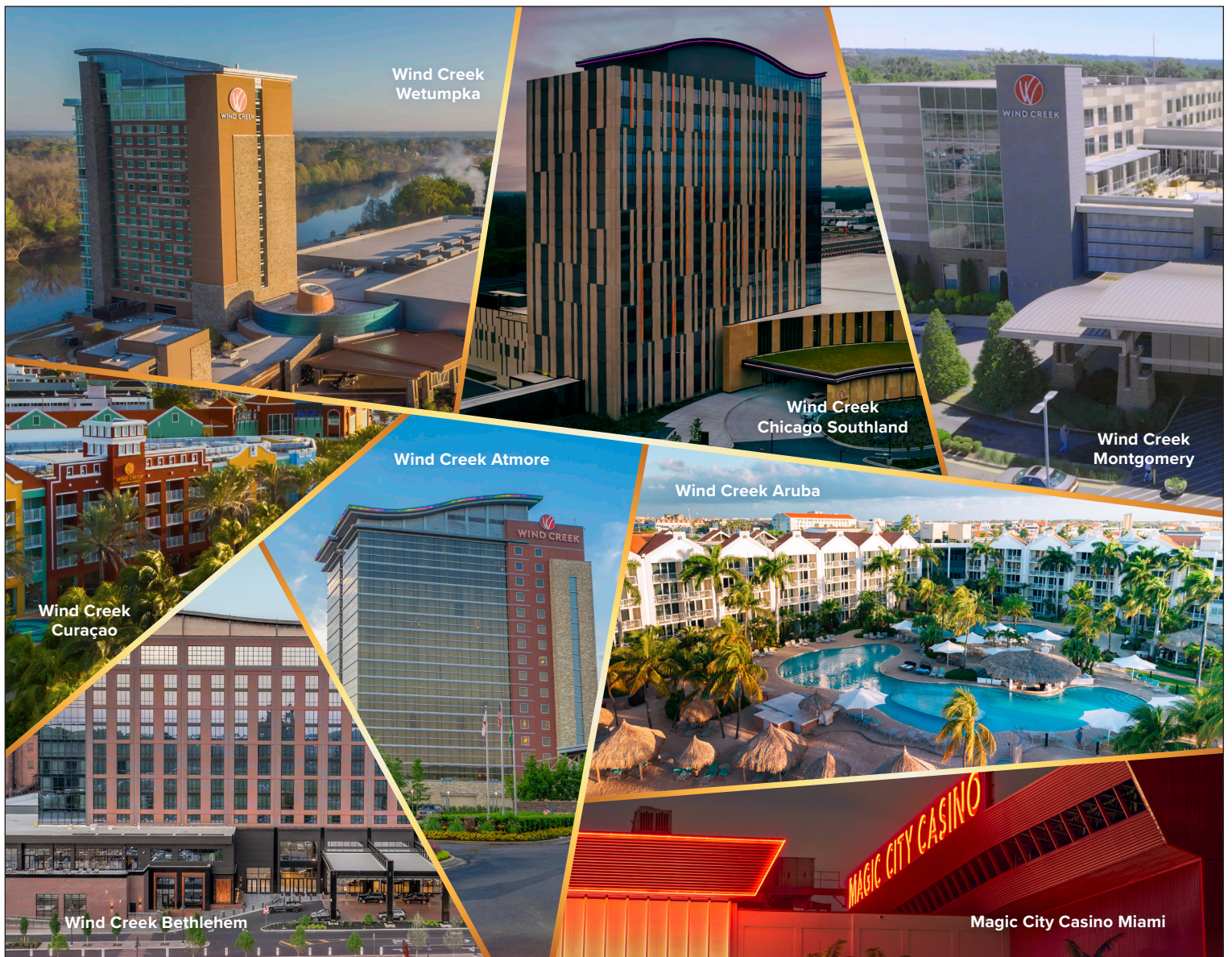
TOP ROW (LEFT TO RIGHT)

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Robert McGhee, *Vice Chair*
Charlotte Meckel, *Secretary*
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BOTTOM ROW (LEFT TO RIGHT)

At-Large Council Members:
Christina Flint-Lowe
Sandy Hollinger
Keith Martin
Arthur Mothershed
Justin Stabler





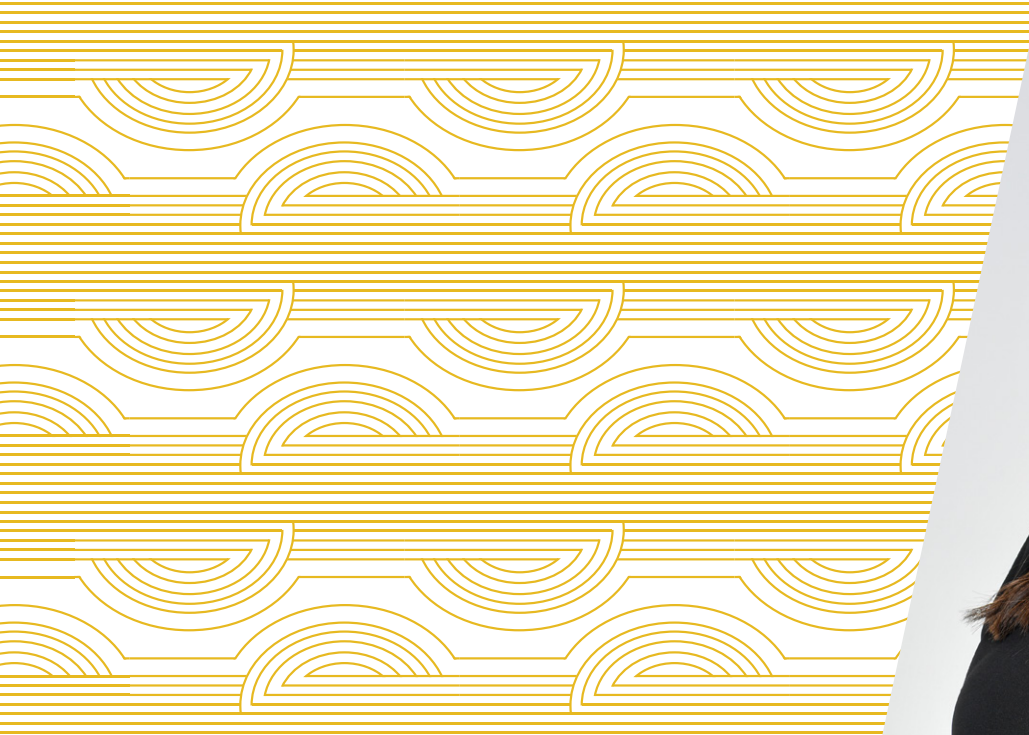
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LEADING WITH HEART

SANDY HOLLINGER'S JOURNEY OF SERVICE

By Sharon Delmar

Tribal Council Member Sandy Hollinger is no stranger to service. Since joining the Poarch Creek Indians as an employee in 2004, her heart has always been focused on helping others. Her journey into leadership was never about ambition—it was about love for her people, compassion for her community, and a calling to serve.

“I’ve always been a motivated person,” Sandy shared. “I have a big heart for people. I love working with people—helping, serving, doing anything I can to make a difference.” She began her work in the health department, and later transitioned into Family Services, where her daily interactions with Tribal Citizens and families deepened her understanding of the community’s needs. It was during that time that she realized she wanted to do more. With encouragement and conviction, she ran for her first election—and was successfully elected to the Tribal Council in 2011. Since then, she has served with dedication and humility.

“There are days that flow easy, and there are days that are stressful and hard,” she said. “But each one has helped me grow into the kind of leader who can face both—someone who shows up on good days and bad.”

In her role on the Tribal Council, Sandy plays an active part in making financial decisions that shape the future of the Tribe. She continues to be present and involved—helping Tribal Citizens get into rental homes, attending local and federal events, and supporting community initiatives. Her work doesn’t stop with her Council seat;

she serves on several important legislative committees, including the Community Legislative Committee, Health Legislative Committee, and Land Legislative Committee.

Her involvement in the Health Legislative Committee has been especially meaningful. For years, Sandy heard the concerns of first-generation Tribal Citizens asking for access to health care beyond the age of 19. She became a strong advocate for expanding those services, and through determination and teamwork, the Tribe now provides care for first-generation citizens of all ages through the Health Department—a major achievement made possible under the regulations of Indian Health Services.

As a member of the Land Legislative Committee, she works to manage and expand the Tribe’s land base, which currently includes over 20,000 acres. The committee also addresses issues like land use, maintenance of the wildlife reserve, and conservation matters that impact Tribal land. “There are three of us on each committee,” she explained, “and we all work together to look after the resources that sustain our Tribe—now and into the future.”

“*There are days that flow easy, and there are days that are stressful and hard. But each one has helped me grow into the kind of leader who can face both...*”

**SANDY HOLLINGER,
AT-LARGE TRIBAL
COUNCIL MEMBER**



PICTURED Left
Sandy Hollinger and her son,
Denver Blake Shuttlesworth



PICTURED Above
Sandy Hollinger's son,
Denver Blake Shuttlesworth



PICTURED Right
Sandy Hollinger with her children Austin,
Denver, and Anna Grace, and husband, Darrell

In addition to her Tribal responsibilities, Sandy is actively engaged in broader community efforts. One of her most time-consuming and heartfelt missions is her work to help save the Atmore Community Hospital. Alongside a local group, she meets weekly to pursue the creation of a new health care board for Escambia County and explore long-term solutions for keeping the rural hospital open.

"It's been in financial trouble for a while," she said, "but I just feel in my heart it's the right thing to do. We have elders in our community who can't travel far for care, and while the hospital may not meet every need, it serves as a vital resource for minor emergencies and health concerns."

In one of the most personal parts of her story, Sandy opened up about her late son's battle with cancer. "When we got the news, he was just 14," she said. "He had neuroblastoma, and it was already stage four. It turned our world upside down."

They spent four and a half years as patients at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital in Memphis, Tennessee. Her son passed away at the age of 19. Through all the pain, Sandy's faith never wavered.

"We just trusted God and counted it all joy to have another day together," she shared. She remembers her son

telling her, "Mom, if I don't get my healing here, I'll be healed in heaven. And I'll see you again."

It is that faith, that promise, which sustains her. "I miss my baby every single day," Sandy said. "There are hard moments and an emptiness that doesn't go away. But I rejoice knowing he's with Jesus—and I hold on to the promise that I'll be with him again one day. Jesus is my rock and my peace. I don't know where I'd be without Him. I give God all the glory for carrying our family through it all."

To others facing health issues, grief, or struggle, she offered this: "Trust in Jesus for your healing and strength. He's always with you."

With all that she's endured and achieved, Sandy remains humble and grateful.

"Well, I would just like to tell everyone that I am so grateful that I have had the opportunity to serve in leadership for the Poarch Creek Indians. I count it all joy. I continue to grow with our Tribal families—our Tribal Citizens—and I am here for you, no matter the hour, day, or night. I am eager to serve. I'm just blessed, thankful, and I want to extend a welcome: if I can help in any way, you can count on me."



DEPARTMENT SPOTLIGHT: LAND AND FORESTRY

By Kennedy Green

The Land and Forestry Department plays a vital role in stewarding the Tribe's natural resources, managing an impressive 16,800 acres of timberland. Their work supports both conservation and sustainability, ensuring healthy ecosystems for future generations. Each year, the team plants and harvests 100 acres of corn and prepares over 200 acres of food plots to provide nourishment and habitat for local wildlife.

In addition to wildlife support, the department is responsible for prescribed burning on 2,000 to 2,500 acres annually—an essential practice for forest health and wildfire prevention. They also harvest and replant around 500 acres of forest each year, demonstrating their commitment to long-term sustainability.

Their efforts extend beyond forest and wildlife management. The department maintains over 100 miles of dirt roads, installs stream crossings and culverts to protect water quality, and manages invasive plant species by treating approximately 100 acres with herbicide annually. They also build and maintain camp houses and skinning sheds, supporting both recreation and community traditions.

Through their work, the Land and Forestry team continues to protect, enhance, and sustain the land—ensuring it remains a valuable resource for generations to come.



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Stephanie Bryan



CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER

Terry Sweat

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1. National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders. (2023). Age-related hearing loss. <https://www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/age-related-hearing-loss>



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PICTURED Judson Indian Cemetery

POARCH 101: *Unmarked but Not Forgotten*

A HISTORY OF NEW HOME AND JUDSON CEMETERIES AND THE LIVES THEY HOLD

By The Poarch Creek Indians Tribal Historic Preservation Department

Tucked into the wooded hills and quiet backroads of southern Alabama, the New Home and Judson Cemeteries hold more than just the remains of those who came before—they cradle the untold stories, cultural resilience, and enduring presence of Creek Indian families. This article traces the origins of these burial grounds, beginning with the early 20th-century establishment of New Home Cemetery and expanding into the lives of individuals like Isaac McGhee and Virginia “Jennie” Rolin Dewise, whose memories linger despite the absence of headstones. Through oral histories, archival research, and anthropological accounts, we uncover a deeper understanding of how these cemeteries—marked and unmarked alike—serve as living testaments to a people’s persistence in the face of erasure. These are not just burial sites; they are sacred landscapes of memory, identity, and survival.

*Over the years,
New Home Cemetery
has been referred to by
many names... These
shifting names reflect
both the deep roots
Native families have
in this place and the
enduring efforts to
preserve their identity,
even as the larger
society attempted to
erase their presence.*

HISTORY OF NEW HOME CEMETERY

New Home Cemetery was established around 1910. Its earliest known burials—John Joe Francis McGhee and Eliza Rolin—took place in 1915 and remain unmarked. A 1962 photograph captures the original fence lines near the section traditionally used for infant burials. Oral history also recalls that the eastern portion of the cemetery was once used for burials associated with a prison farm.

The land surrounding New Home was homesteaded by John F. McGhee in 1900. Census records trace his relocation from the Jeddo (Cvto) community in 1870 to Hog Fork by 1880, reflecting the broader movement of Alabama Creek families who sought refuge from racial violence and systemic displacement during the post-Reconstruction era.

Over the years, New Home Cemetery has been referred to by many names: Cemetery in Indianville, Hogfork Indian Cemetery, Hog Waller, and McGheeville Cemetery. These shifting names reflect both the deep roots Native families have in this place and the enduring efforts to preserve their identity, even as the larger society attempted to erase their presence.

SPOTLIGHT ON ISAAC MCGHEE

Although there is no headstone marking Isaac McGhee's grave in New Home Cemetery, his memory lives on. Born around 1890 to Polly Louisa Gibson and John Joe Francis McGhee, Isaac was raised in the Hog Fork community after his family relocated from Jeddo (Cvto) around 1900. His father, Joe McGhee, was a fluent speaker of the Mvskoke (Creek) language and the grandson of Lynn McGhee.

Isaac remembered how his father crafted his own flint tools, bows, and arrows to hunt wild game. He worked tirelessly—farming cotton, leasing timber for turpentine operations, and clearing and burning land for wages. Though Isaac had a bad foot that limited his mobility, he still found ways to contribute. He used a slingshot to hunt birds for food, fished with cane poles and thread, and helped build potato bins, white oak baskets, and corn cribs.

Isaac attended school for only ten days—he simply couldn't walk the five-mile distance—but he possessed a wealth of practical knowledge. "If you can get by an Indian, he knows more than anybody else near about... just how to get by," he told anthropologist Anthony Paredes in 1972. "If you've got it in your heart to do a thing, well, the good Lord'll help you out with it."

During Isaac's youth, only four non-Creek families had settled in the stretch between Red Hill (Huxford) and Headapedea. This area was part of the former Creek Nation, with the historic Federal Road passing through both communities, and remained home to resilient Creek families living on land grants issued 38 years after the Creek War. Over time, these families were gradually confined to an even smaller portion of that land—what is now the Poarch Creek Reservation.

Frolics—community social dances—were a common tradition in the area. Anthropologist Frank Speck observed and recorded that "social activities of an Indian... have survived in two folk dances... the Cotillon to the music of a fiddle, and the Breakdown... a modernization of the old Creek Round (or Stomp) Dance." These gatherings were held for special occasions, such as when Isaac was drafted into the Army, or during extended fishing trips to Little River, where he recalled men dancing and catching rock fish.

Isaac recalled how the rock fish disappeared after people began using dynamite in the rivers. "After the white man commenced to coming in here and commenced to dynamite them," he



PICTURED Right Isaac McGhee being interviewed



PICTURED Left New Home Indian Cemetery arrowhead sign

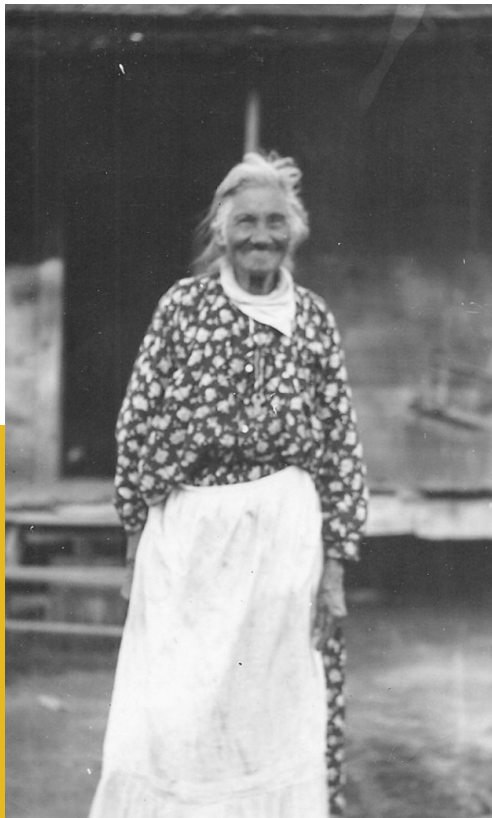
PICTURED Right Isaac McGhee at New Home Indian Cemetery



...continued on next page



PICTURED Top Judson Indian Cemetery arrowhead sign
Middle Virginia "Jennie" Rolin Dewise's house
Bottom Virginia "Jennie" Rolin Dewise



said, "they left." He also passed down stories from his father's time—like the days when passenger pigeons filled the skies. "They darken the sun," his father used to say. "But... the white man come in there... got to shooting... all went off and never did come back no more."

Isaac's family lived self-sufficiently, relying on the land and their deep knowledge of herbal medicine. His aunt Treacy, brother Frazier, and nephew Norman were especially skilled in these remedies. "Norman, he got too bold with this," Isaac recalled. "And they caught him. Put him in jail in Brewton." He remembered riding in a buggy with his aunt as she collected roots and vines along the roadside. "Get medicine out of the woods, buddy," he said, "do you more good than any doctors right in Atmore right today."

Isaac lived in log homes with dirt floors, cooked over open fires, and ate the food his family worked hard to grow—sweet potatoes, pumpkins, cornbread, rice, and sofke. "Take good sweet milk and sofke—it's the goodest thing you'd ever wanna eat," he once said. Though he never married or had children, Isaac is remembered fondly as a beloved uncle and cousin. He passed away on July 27, 1973, and was laid to rest at New Home Cemetery, where no headstone marks his grave.

A HISTORY OF JUDSON CEMETERY

Local oral tradition once held that Lynn Magee, a patriarch of the Poarch Creek Indians, was buried at what would later become Judson Cemetery. However, archival research and a 1961 newspaper article reveal a different origin for the site.

In reality, the land that became Judson Cemetery was donated by Joseph and Serene (Sarah) Coley, African American neighbors to Magee's children. Joseph Coley, a formerly enslaved man from North Carolina, and his wife homesteaded the land and gifted it to the local community as a burial ground prior to Joseph's death in 1920. Both Joseph and Serene are buried at Judson and both are unmarked.

A Guion Miller application submitted by one of Magee's descendants refers to the area as "Headapedea," meaning Head of the Perdido Creek. The location was also known as Taittsville, named for David Tate—a prominent Creek leader and maternal ancestor to several families who would later become part of the Poarch Creek community. In his will, Tate freed his enslaved people 34 years prior to Emancipation Proclamation and gifted 400 head of cattle to Lynn Magee, along with extended rights to reside on Tate family lands.

Although archival records suggest that few Creek families lived in the area before 1860, only 36 burials are documented at Judson between 1847 and 1920. After the Civil War, Creek families from Eliska (Vleskv), Mineola, Jeddo (Cvto), and Red Hill (Huxford) were gradually displaced from their traditional homelands. Under the pressures of Jim Crow

segregation and land loss, many were forced to resettle in more remote areas. Much of the land surrounding Judson had originally been reserved by heirs of Lynn Magee in 1853, providing a refuge for displaced Creek descendants. Today, Judson Cemetery stands as a quiet reminder of the resilience and persistence of those families who remained.

It's easy to forget that every unmarked grave represents someone vital to our lineage. One such person resting at Judson Cemetery... is Jennie Dewise.

SPOTLIGHT ON

VIRGINIA “JENNIE” ROLIN DEWISE

It's easy to forget that every unmarked grave represents someone vital to our lineage. One such person resting at Judson Cemetery without a marker is Jennie Dewise.

Jennie was born in 1855 as Virginia Coon and lived through the period when the Coon family changed their surname to Rolin.

Jennie's paternal grandparents were Jack Coon and Mary Polly Moniac. Her maternal grandparents were Jack McGhee, the son of Lynn McGhee, and Moriah Adams.

In 1893, Jennie married Westley “West” Dewise, who was also Creek. She helped make ends meet by working as a washerwoman for a family.

West Dewise was previously married to Rosa, the daughter of Richard McGhee—son of Lynn McGhee. Rosa, who is also buried at Judson Cemetery without a marker, passed away for reasons unknown. After her death, West later married Jennie.

By 1860, West Dewise was living with Susan Marlow and Sam Moniac, the grandson of Old Man Sam. West and his siblings had been taken in by various ancestral Poarch Creek households during their youth. His brother, for example, stayed with the Hathcocks. It's highly possible they lost family members during Indian Removal, along with others in Poarch Creek history—such as Jennie's own grandmother, Mariah.

West, like Jennie's father, served in the Civil War. For 42 years, Jennie collected a pension from the state of Alabama for her husband's military service. This was confirmed by respected anthropologist Frank Speck, who visited the Poarch Creek community in 1941 and photographed Jennie's home, which he described as an “Indian hut, very old.” He believed Jennie was over 100 years old at the time. Jennie and her children lived with her sister, Lal Rolin, near St. Anna's Church.

West passed away in 1925 and was buried at Judson Cemetery. Jennie was also laid to rest at Judson when she died on February 16, 1941, at the age of 86. They had two children: a son named Richard and a daughter named Livvie (Olivea). Livvie's daughter, Mazie, is buried at Poarch Baptist Cemetery and remains fondly remembered in the community. Blind from an early age, Mazie was a brilliant woman who learned to read braille and often said she could tell whether someone was Creek Indian or belonged to another ethnic background simply by the way they spoke. All of the names mentioned here, except Mazie, remain unmarked in our Tribal Cemeteries.

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DO YOU HAVE ANCESTORS BURIED AT JUDSON, NEW HOME CEMETERY OR HUXFORD?

The Poarch Creek Tribal Historic Preservation Office (THPO) is working hard to find the names of those buried without a marker at Judson, New Home Cemetery, and Huxford. Most of these unmarked graves are from long ago. If you know family stories about someone who may be buried there without a headstone and *their name is not on our list shown below, please reach out.*

Your knowledge of your family history can help us make sure everyone's ancestors are remembered and honored in the future.

Please email the Tribal Historic Preservation Office at THPOGroup@pci-nsn.gov, or call Tribal Historic Preservation Officer Billy Bailey at (251) 368-9136 ext. 2075.

51 Names of Unmarked Graves in NEW HOME CEMETERY

Almon, William	McGhee, Courtney	McGhee, Patsy	Rolin, Elbert
Bailey, Infant	McGhee, Ella Fair	McGhee, Patty	Rolin, Eliza
Bailey, Marie A.	McGhee, Harold	McGhee, Polly Louisa Gibson	Rolin, Glenn
Blackburn, Mary A	McGhee, Inell	McGhee, Rucia	Rolin, Joe
Blackburn, Tony	McGhee, Infant	McGhee, Tommie	Rolin, Lela W.
Dawson, Charles	McGhee, Infant	McGhee, Tony R.	Rolin, Missie
Dawson, Lillar	McGhee, Infant	McGhee, William D	Rolin, Ruben
Digmon, Marshall	McGhee, Issac	McGhee, Wilson	Rolin, William
Dotson, Charles	McGhee, John F.	Qualls, Rogert	Rolin, William Jr
McGhee, Bama	McGhee, John H.	Rolin Z.B.	Scruggs, Annie
McGhee, Celie	McGhee, Joyce	Rolin, Brooks	Sells, Hattie
McGhee, Child	McGhee, Mack	Rolin, Dollie	Taylor, Donald
McGhee, Clifton	McGhee, Maggie	Rolin, Edward L.	Turner, Avery

123 Names of Unmarked Graves in JUDSON CEMETERY

Adams, BD	Gibson, Robert	McGhee, Linn	Rolin, Elbert
Adams, Francis	Gibson, Wade	McGhee, Linnie	Rolin, Ethel
Adams, Peggy	Gibson, Unknown	McGhee, Lizzy	Rolin, Fred W.
Adams, William	Gleeson, Lizzie	McGhee, Nancy	Rolin, George
Adult, MW	Hathcock, Carmen	McGhee, Richard	Rolin, John "Coon"
Walker, Lutreacy	Hathcock, Mary	McGhee, Richard Jr	Rolin, John M
Bal, Ryne	Heathcote, James	McGhee, Ruby	Rolin, John Mike
Black	Henley, Cola C.	McGhee, Ruby	Rolin, Lena
Chippy	Hicks, Irene	McGhee, Susan	Rolin, Lile
Colbert, David	Jackson, Albert	McGhee, Wildy	Rolin, Lula
Colbert, Susan	Jackson, Andrew	McGhee, William	Rolin, Marie Lee
Dees, Franklin	Jackson, Elizabeth	McGhee, William T.	Rolin, Mary
Dees, Pearl G.	Johnson, Gladys	McGhee, Catherine	Rolin, Missie
Dewise, Olivea	Jordan, Minnie	McGhee, Mariah	Rolin, Rena
Dewise, Levy	Joseph Coley	Moniac, Mary P.	Rolin, Ryne
Dewise, Rosa	Lambert Eunice	Motley, Lilly	Rolin, Sally
Dewise, Virginia	Lambert, William L	Neallie	Rolin, Sam
Dewise, Wesley	Lassitter, Ronnie	Presley, Anthony	Rolin, Sandra L.
Flurnoy, William	Linam, Samuel Jr	Presley, Baby	Rolin, William
Gibson, Burnetty	Linam, Sue	Presley, Exena	Rolin, Willie L.
Gibson, Ernest	Linam, Thelma	Rackard, Earney	Ruby
Gibson, Gid Jr.	Lucas, Dory	Rackard, Leon	Selby, Hazle
Gibson, Gideon Jr.	Manac, Jack A	Reed, Arthur	Serene Coley
Gibson, Gideon Sr.	McGhee, Alexander Dixon	Roland Richard	Walker, Emma
Gibson, Jerry	McGhee, Billy	Roland, Exalee	Walker, Matilda
Gibson, Jerry D.	McGhee, Elizabeth	Roland, John	Walker, Richard
Gibson, Margaret	McGhee, Elizabeth	Roland, Mary	Wood, Horace
Gibson, Martha	McGhee, Ely	Roland, Rena	Lula's Baby
Gibson, Nancy	McGhee, Frances	Rolin, Alec	Missy's Baby
Gibson, Riley	McGhee, Jereal	Rolin, Cleveland Jr	Zeffie Rolin Gibson's Baby
Gibson, Robert	McGhee, Jerusia	Rolin, Dollie	



We are the Land

A LIVING NARRATIVE OF TRIBAL SOVEREIGNTY

By Sharon Delmar

From the start, the conversation made one thing clear: sovereignty is inseparable from land. It's not simply about territory, it's about the power to govern, to preserve, and to protect.



On October 6, 2023, the podcast “A Place Called Poarch” hosted a powerful conversation about tribal sovereignty, land rights, and legal challenges—featuring interviewer Megan Zamora, Lori Stinson, Attorney General for the Poarch Band of Creek Indians, and Venus McGee Prince, Vice President of Compliance for Wind Creek Hospitality. Their discussion was more than a legal analysis; it was a story of survival, resilience, and ongoing struggle for the recognition that Indigenous Nations are not only sovereign by right—but by responsibility and heritage.

From the start, the conversation made one thing clear: sovereignty is inseparable from land. It's not simply about territory, it's about the power to govern, to preserve, and to protect. Without land, tribal sovereignty becomes abstract; with it, it becomes rooted in action.

Venus McGee Prince brought her experience at the U.S. Department of the Interior into the conversation, describing just how difficult it is for tribes to place land into trust. Between 13 and 18 formal steps, local opposition, federal bureaucracy, and overlapping jurisdictions, acquiring trust land is a grueling process—especially for tribes seeking land for gaming or economic development. And even when the process is followed to the letter, it can still be denied for reasons that have little to do with the merits of a tribe's case.

Lori Stinson pointed to a core legal hurdle that has haunted tribes for over a decade: the Supreme Court's 2009 decision in *Carcieri v. Salazar*. That ruling essentially stated that the federal government can only take land into trust for tribes that were “under federal jurisdiction” in 1934. For tribes like Poarch Creek, recognized in 1984, this decision has become a barrier to acquiring new land—even land of deep cultural or spiritual value. Magnolia Branch, a place the tribe hoped to preserve for non-gaming use, is just one of many examples of how the ruling has limited the tribe's sovereignty.

As the conversation continued, the topic of gaming on trust land revealed more legal entanglements. The Indian Gaming Regulatory Act of 1988 created paths for tribes to operate casinos, but it also imposed restrictions, especially on newly acquired land. Venus McGee Prince noted that unless the land was already in trust before 1988—or met narrow exceptions, the process required the

approval of both the Secretary of the Interior and the state's governor. Local governments often resist these applications, not because they doubt the tribe's right, but because of economic and political concerns: lost tax revenue, jurisdictional shifts, and competition.

Megan Zamora asked a central question: "Why is land so important for tribal nations?" Lori Stinson answered plainly: Because you can't govern without it. Land allows tribes to enforce their laws, build infrastructure, and care for their people. Without a land base, even a federally recognized tribe operates with limited authority—bound by external jurisdictions, taxation barriers, and diminished control.

They also discussed how sovereignty is not just a tribal concern—it's a national one. Legal decisions made in one region have ripple effects across Indian Country. Lori Stinson underscored how consortiums like USET (United South and Eastern Tribes) and NCAI (National Congress of American Indians) help tribes band together in legal battles. Amicus briefs and shared advocacy efforts strengthen each tribe's position and create a unified front in the fight for land and sovereignty.

But the path forward isn't just legal. It's political. Venus McGee Prince reminded listeners that Tribal Citizens must be active participants in local and state elections. State governors have the power to approve or block land-into-trust gaming projects. County and city officials shape public opinion. Educating these leaders—and electing those who understand tribal sovereignty—is critical to protecting tribal futures.

The conversation concluded on a broader note. Tribal sovereignty isn't just about governance—it's about identity, presence, and perception. Too often, Native nations are portrayed as historical footnotes or cultural relics. Lori, Megan, and Venus all emphasized the need for Native communities to be recognized as living governments with living cultures—not mascots, not memories, but leaders in the present and future of this country.

This podcast served not only as a discussion, but as a call to action. Land is not just property, it's power. The right to hold, manage, and protect it is central to what it means to be sovereign. And while legal and political systems continue to complicate that right, tribal nations like Poarch Creek remain committed to asserting it—with patience, strategy, and strength.

Because in the end, sovereignty isn't something granted. It's something remembered, protected, and practiced—every day, on every acre we reclaim.

► Available on Apple Podcast, Spotify, or wherever you get podcasts. Scan the QR Code to listen on our website now.



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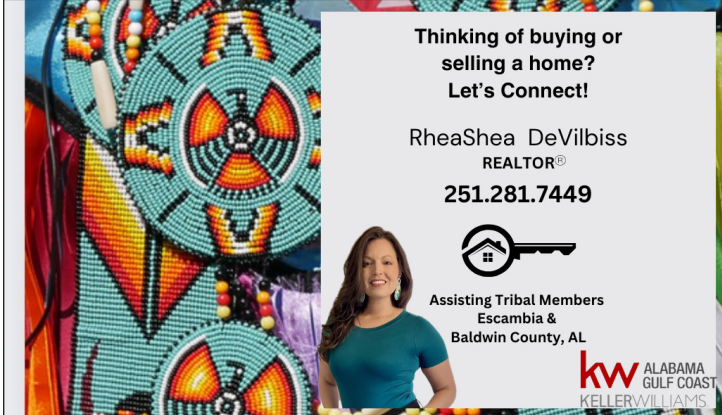


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OWA's Fun Filled Fall

SEPTEMBER

6

Once Upon a Story

13, 20 & 27

Island Movie Nights

20

Community Safety Day

FALL INTO OUR SEASON OF FUN with can't-miss events for the whole family! Celebrate autumn days with a full lineup of events throughout OWA. Plan your fall getaway at VisitOWA.com.

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FANCY DANCE

Free to watch with an Apple+ subscription.



By Kennedy Green

If you're looking for a powerful, heartfelt film that doesn't feel like everything else out there, *Fancy Dance* should be at the top of your list. Set on the Seneca-Cayuga reservation in Oklahoma, the story follows Jax (played brilliantly by Lily Gladstone) as she searches for her missing sister and looks after her niece, Roki. It's a mix of mystery, family drama, and cultural celebration with a lot of emotional depth.

What really makes this film stand out is how grounded and real it feels. It doesn't shy away from tough topics like the crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous women, but it handles them with care and honesty. At the heart of it all is the relationship between Jax and Roki it's full of love, tension, and resilience.

Director Erica Tremblay (a citizen of the Seneca-Cayuga Nation) brings a rare authenticity to the screen. From the everyday moments to the scenes at Pow Wows, everything feels genuine and rooted in community. And yes, the title *Fancy Dance* ties back to the vibrant, high-energy dance style celebrated at Pow Wows but it's also a beautiful metaphor for survival, identity, and holding on to family.

This is one of those films that sticks with you. Quiet, emotional, and deeply moving.

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 Sharon Delmar at
sdelmar@pci-nsn.gov.

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POARCH CREEK INDIANS DONATE

\$10,000 TO HELP FURNISH EXCEL HIGH SCHOOL'S FIELD HOUSE EXPANSION

By Lauren Giddeons & Karen Rodriguez

The Poarch Creek Indians have donated \$10,000 to support the furnishing of Excel High School's newly expanded field house, creating a space for both male and female athletes to utilize. The occasion was marked with an official check presentation on Tuesday, July 29 at the new facility.

The field house expansion will provide Excel High School's athletes with enhanced training facilities, including top-of-the-line weight equipment designed to build strength, endurance, and resilience—both physical and mental. The new facility will also aid in injury prevention and include a film room, locker room, and restrooms to better serve student-athletes across all sports.

"We are grateful to the Poarch Creek Indians for their generous contribution to help make this field house a

reality for our student-athletes," said Jason Phillips, Athletic Director and Head Football Coach at Excel High School.

The event included remarks from school leaders and Poarch Creek Indians Tribal Council Members, who presented the donation on behalf of the Tribe. "Our Tribe is honored to invest in the next generation of athletes and leaders," said Sandy Hollinger, Poarch Creek Indians Tribal Council Member. "Facilities like this provide opportunity, discipline, and community—and we're proud to be part of that."

Excel High School's upgraded athletic facility marks a significant step forward in student development, and the Poarch Creek Indians are proud to celebrate this milestone with the school and community.

Recharge & Refuel

Food - Fuel- Gifts

Atmore - Poarch - Wetumpka ^{EV}

CREEK
Travel Stores



WIND CREEK ATMORE CHEFS SHINE AT FLAVORS OF THE SOUTH EVENT

By Amelia Tognoli

“
The Market, one of
Wind Creek Atmore’s
dining facilities, wowed
the crowd with
Chef Leon’s famous
Chicken & Shrimp
Gumbo—packed
with bold, authentic
Southern flavors.”

Wind Creek Atmore’s Market Team had an incredible time at The Central Baldwin Chamber of Commerce’s Flavors of the South event in Robertsedale, AL. Guests enjoyed a flavorful evening sampling dishes and beverages from amazing local restaurants along the coast and even tried their luck in the silent auction.

Our talented chefs—Chef Cherokee Duncan, Chef Leon Crenshaw, and Chef Jonathan Kazemekas—along with our Sponsorship team, brought energy, experience, and plenty of smiles as they served Guests with signature southern hospitality.

“It was different, seeing everyone with the love of creating amazing dishes inspires you,” said Duncan, Chef at Wind Creek Atmore.

The Market, one of Wind Creek Atmore’s dining facilities, wowed the crowd with Chef Leon’s famous Chicken & Shrimp Gumbo—packed with bold, authentic Southern flavors.

“It was great to win the gumbo cook competition, and I’m still on a high from the event,” said Crenshaw, Chef at Wind Creek Atmore. “The energy was amazing, and the food incredible. Can’t wait to do it again.”

We’re thrilled to share that our Chefs took home the 2025 Flavors of the South Best Savory Award! Congratulations to our amazing Market Chefs for representing Wind Creek Atmore with pride and passion!

All proceeds from the event benefited the Central Baldwin Chamber of Commerce, which enables it to continue its mission of fostering economic growth and community development, including areas near Wind Creek Atmore. These funds are reinvested into various initiatives, local events, business support programs, educational opportunities, and community improvement projects.



UNITED CLEANUP OAK RIDGE (UCOR) HONORS STREET LEGAL INDUSTRIES WITH SMALL BUSINESS AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN ENVIRONMENTAL CLEANUP

*Native American Owned Business Based in Oak Ridge Recognized
for Leadership, Collaboration, and Local Union
Partnership in Executing U.S. Department of Energy Project*

By Lauren Giddeons & Karen Rodriguez

Street Legal Industries, which is based in Oak Ridge and owned by the Poarch Creek Indians of Alabama, has received United Cleanup Oak Ridge (UCOR's) prestigious Small Business Award for its outstanding contributions to the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE's) environmental cleanup mission. The recognition was announced at UCOR's 2025 Small Business Awards Ceremony celebrating companies that have played vital roles in advancing DOE's objectives on the Oak Ridge Reservation.

The award highlights Street Legal's successful execution of a technically demanding, competitively awarded construction project for which the company provided key environmental support services in partnership with local labor and DOE stakeholders.

"This award is a tribute to the hard work and resilience of our entire team, especially our partners in the local union labor force whose skill and dedication were instrumental in completing this complex scope of work safely and efficiently," said Pat Bisese, President of Street Legal Industries. "It also reflects the strong collaboration we've had with DOE throughout the project, from planning to execution. Earning this recognition in our home community of Oak Ridge makes it all the more meaningful. We're proud to support the Department's mission and to contribute to a cleaner, safer future."

Street Legal was recently acquired by the Poarch Creek Indians of Atmore, Alabama, which owns more than 40 diversified businesses across the U.S. and in the Caribbean. Stephanie Bryan, Poarch Creek's Chair and CEO remarked, "It is extremely gratifying for us, as a Tribal nation, to have one of our companies play a pivotally important role in this large and complex environmental cleanup project for the U.S. Department of Energy. We commend the dedicated team at Street Legal for their superlative work and congratulate them on this recognition."

UCOR, the DOE's lead cleanup contractor in Oak Ridge, selected awardees based on demonstrated performance, safety, innovation, and partnership in mission-critical work. Street Legal has continuously supported the DOE Oak Ridge Environmental Management mission since 2000.

Anna Love, CFO of Street Legal Industries noted that "Receiving this award is not only a milestone for our company, but a validation of the values we've built into every contract; accountability, agility, and alignment with our client's goals," She continued, "Delivering excellence on this project required precise coordination, attention to exceeding schedule expectations, financial discipline, and relentless focus from everyone involved. It's a true team win that speaks to the strength of our people and the power of purpose-driven performance."



SUMMER MAY BE ENDING BUT THE FUN CONTINUES AT OWA

By Catherine Hasty



Don't pack away your flip-flops just yet—the fun is just getting started at OWA! Just because summer is winding down doesn't mean the good times are over. OWA Parks & Resort is turning up the excitement this September with a lineup of family-friendly events that'll keep the whole crew smiling. From live music and movie nights, to delicious dining options and one-of-a-kind entertainment, there's something for everyone at OWA this fall.

Here's what's coming up:

SEPTEMBER 6 | Once Upon a Story

Celebrate the beginning of Literacy Month in Downtown OWA during Once Upon a Story! Enjoy family-friendly fun like a Scholastic Book Fair, storytime, crafts, free face painting, and more magical activities inspired by your favorite stories.

SEPTEMBER 13, 20, AND 27 | Island Movie Nights

Bring a blanket, grab the popcorn, and enjoy outdoor family movie nights under the stars every Saturday on the OWA Island. Come early to enjoy dinner in Downtown OWA.



SEPTEMBER 20 Community Safety Day

Don't miss this local-favorite annual event. Enjoy interactive demonstrations from first responders, public safety officers and local organizations while we celebrate those who work so hard to keep our community safe.

This September, continue to enjoy all the thrills and chills at Tropic Falls theme and water parks on Saturdays and Sundays from 10:00 am - 6:00 pm. And check out the great lineup of live music at the OWA Theater. The month kicks off with "An Evening with Paul Thorn", who brings back to the OWA stage his signature blend of southern roots, blues, country and rock, followed by the return of "Big Bam Boom-Hall and Oats Tribute" on September 20.

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

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.



We invite Indigenous Creators to delve into Indigenous storytelling through photos!

These photos will be used to develop media materials including advertising, PowerPoint presentations, brochures, and posters to promote StrongHearts Native Helpline and the relatives we serve.

Submission Criteria

Compensation is based on content and quality as described below.

- Photos must honor Native American and Alaska Native people and culture.
- Quality should include a resolution of 300 dots per inch (DPI) or 300 pixels per inch (PPI).

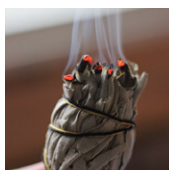
Selections will be made at the end of each month. Compensation will be processed during the following month.

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

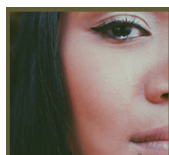
Indigenous Story Telling Themes: Native-centered, Trauma Informed and Empowerment Based Advocacy.



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



Indigenous Places (scenic) means places where Indigenous people live or visit whether it's a traditional home or Pipe Stone National Monument. Photos can include animals significant to indigenous culture.



Indigenous Healing (cultural practices) represents a cultural event that is a known healing practice such as burning of tobacco or sage, or activities harvesting natural food sources.

Domestic, Dating and Sexual violence such as emotional, physical, sexual, financial, digital and cultural abuse; activism and/or protest against social or racial injustice.

Earn up to \$250 for each digital photo selected! Submit your photos via email to submissions@strongheartshelpline.org

This project was supported by Grant No. 15JOVW-23-GG-02829-CSSP awarded by the Office on Violence Against Women, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, conclusions, and recommendations expressed in this publication/program/exhibition are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the U.S. Department of Justice.



NEW ENERGY JOINS FAMILIAR FAVORITES

AS DOWNTOWN OWA CONTINUES TO DELIVER THE FUN

By Lauren Giddeons & Karen Rodriguez

OWA Parks & Resort continues to expand its appeal as a premier entertainment destination on the Gulf Coast with several new, exciting businesses opening their doors, along with the addition of a new team leader focused on building on that momentum all throughout Downtown OWA.

Aura Adventures, Neon Rebellion, Jon Smith Subs, and the highly anticipated Bikini Blini Bakery are now proud to call Downtown OWA their home as they offer a vibrant mix of new attractions and eateries for visitors and locals alike. These openings reflect a strong start to the summer season of growth onsite and OWA's commitment to providing unique experiences.

"We're creating a destination that evolves with our guests' interests," said David Holmin, OWA's new Director of Internal Sales and Leasing. "We want every visit to Downtown OWA to feel fresh and full of fun."

Holmin brings more than 25 years of experience in retail development, tenant relations, and leasing strategy. Since joining the OWA team, his role consists of re-energizing Downtown OWA by continuing to identify and recruit businesses that complement OWA's family-friendly atmosphere, while also bringing new, exciting concepts to the table.

These new spots are all about adding more flavor and variety to Downtown OWA. Whether you're into glow-in-the-dark games, fresh-baked treats, or a relaxing paddle on the lake, there's something new to check out. It's all part of OWA's mission to keep things fresh and give guests more reasons to stay, play, and come back again. Among the newest additions:

BIKINI BLINI BAKERY

The new bakery opens with a public ribbon cutting event on July 31. The mother-daughter duo behind Bikini Blini Bakery, Karen and Sydney Burgess, have built a loyal following and are now bringing their homemade treats to the OWA community.

Visitors can enjoy gourmet crepes, sandwiches, cakes, cupcakes, and more in a bright, Instagram-worthy setting. Bikini Blini also offers cake-decorating classes and pop-up carts for sampling and outdoor sales, giving guests even more ways to indulge. The bakery will be open Tuesday-Saturday from 11 am-7 pm and Sundays 1-6 pm.

NEON REBELLION

This fully immersive, glow-in-the-dark laser tag experience is now open and located next door to Cozumel Bar & Grill. Neon Rebellion delivers action-packed fun for all ages and is quickly becoming a fan favorite. Neon Rebellion is fully integrated with the OWA Arcade experience offering even more ways to play and win. Guests can use an Arcade VIP Pass at Neon Rebellion and earn points in laser tag battles then redeem them for prizes at the Arcade. Neon Rebellion is open Sunday - Thursday from 11 am-8 pm and Friday and Saturday from 11 am-10 pm.

JON SMITH SUBS

The popular sandwich chain brings its signature grilled subs and generous portions to the heart of Downtown OWA, offering a delicious new option for lunch or dinner. Known for freshly baked bread, high-quality meats, and made-to-order hot subs, Jon Smith Subs is a welcome addition to the growing food scene onsite. The Downtown OWA location is proudly owned and operated by Mike Orta, U.S. Veteran, adding another layer of meaning to this community-focused business. With a strong commitment to service, quality, and hospitality, Jon Smith Subs is more than a meal—it's a brand that values connection, tradition, and supporting those who serve. Guests can expect a warm welcome and a hearty bite every time they visit Monday-Sunday from 10 am-9 pm.



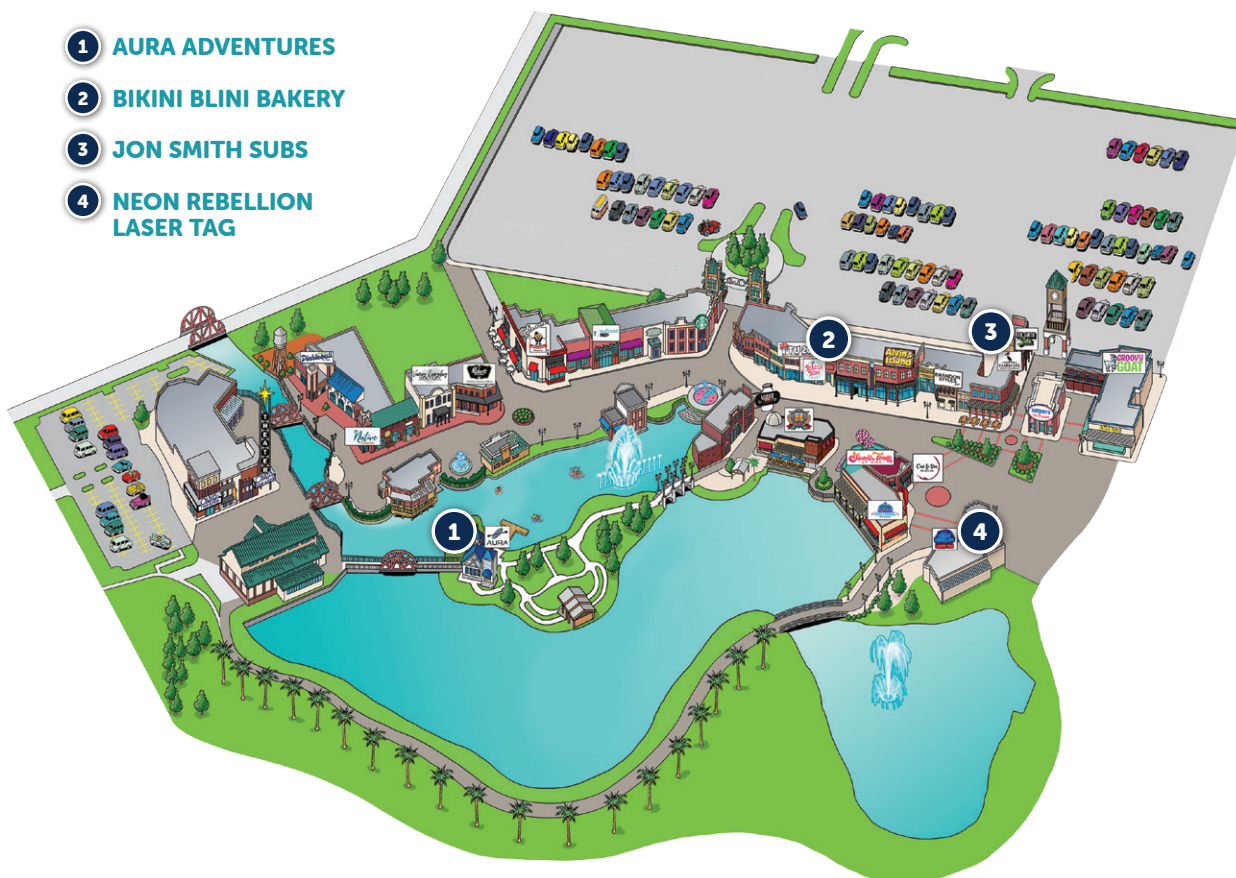
AURA ADVENTURES

This dynamic, family-owned outdoor adventure company offers unforgettable fun on the lake in Downtown OWA—whether you visit by day or night. During the day, guests can enjoy classic lake experiences like pedal boats and paddleboarding, perfect for families, younger kids, or anyone looking to relax and take in the scenery. But when the sun goes down, Aura Adventures transforms into something truly unique with its glow-in-the-dark kayak experience. Outfitted with LED lights beneath each kayak, guests can paddle across the illuminated lake for a magical, Insta-worthy adventure under the stars. Whether you're planning a family outing or a memorable date night, Aura Adventures brings two totally different experiences to the same beautiful spot—no two visits are ever the same. Walk-ups are welcome Monday–Saturday between 5 pm and 9:30 pm. Daytime hours vary, visit goauraadventures.com.

These openings are part of a larger vision to continue building a dynamic, walkable entertainment district filled with places to eat, shop, and play. With Holmin now leading internal sales and leasing, even more exciting announcements are expected in the coming months.

“OWA isn’t just a resort—it’s a growing destination,” Holmin added. “It’s incredibly rewarding to help shape its future by bringing in new businesses to OWA and the city of Foley, Alabama, while continuing to support our existing businesses who have been the cornerstones that have entertained guests since the beginning.”

For more information on all that's new at OWA Parks & Resort, visit VisitOWA.com.



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Abuse of AUTHORITY

By Carrie Martin, Ethics Board Chair

W

e have all heard the words “abuse of authority”. Have you ever really stopped to consider all the things which can be considered under this ethics category?

In both the ethics code and HR policy under ethical standards; Abuse of Authority is listed.

1. No Tribal Official, key employee or employee (HR) shall knowingly make any decisions or enter into promises of any kind that may be binding upon the Poarch Band of Creek Indians unless he or she is properly authorized.

2. No Tribal Official, key employee or employee (HR) shall use his or her authority or position to intimidate or improperly influence any fellow Tribal Officials, Key employees or employees (HR) to act in a way that **violates any applicable law, policies or procedures**.

Those three words: **APPLICABLE LAW, POLICIES, OR PROCEDURES** covers such an abundance of information. No matter what your position with the tribe is everyone has laws, policies and procedures they must adhere to.

While this is not an all-inclusive list of violations here are some to think about. (Information obtained via google)

- Harassment and discrimination
- Bullying and intimidation
- Unfair treatment in promotions and assignments
- Unreasonable demands and expectations
- Retaliation for reporting misconduct
- Sexual harassment
- Corruption and bribery
- Nepotism cronyism (hiring or promoting friends or family instead of qualified candidates)
- Censorship
- Misuse of tribal funds
- Preferential treatment
- Campaign activity
- Misuse of confidential information
- False Claims
- Using tribal property for personal gain

As you see there are many avenues which could be abused under this heading. So, in closing no matter what your position with the Tribe is remember everyone is held responsible for their own actions. Stop and think before doing. **Ask yourself am I abusing my authority?**



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CREEK CORNER

SEPTEMBER 2025 IMPORTANT DATES

- | | | |
|-------------|--|----------------|
| 9.1 | GOVERNMENT OFFICES CLOSED Labor Day | |
| 9.2 | SUBMISSION DEADLINE October Issue | |
| 9.2 | MUSEUM GIFT SHOP CLOSED Inventory | |
| 9.4 | TRIBAL COUNCIL MEETING TC Chambers | 4:00 PM |
| 9.5 | FAMILY COURT Tribal Courtroom | |
| 9.9 | TRIBAL COURT Tribal Courtroom | |
| 9.18 | TRIBAL COUNCIL MEETING TC Chambers | 4:00 PM |
| 9.19 | FAMILY COURT Tribal Courtroom | |
| 9.23 | TRIBAL COURT Tribal Courtroom | |