



CREEK CORNER

The official magazine of the Poarch Band of Creek Indians

SEPTEMBER 2023



JUSTINE SWINDELL:
*The “Our Story”
Illustrator*



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Charlotte Meckel Inducted Into Positive Maturity's "Top 50 Over 50"

More info on page 22

CREDITS

Ashlee "Katie" Mothershed
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FROM THE EDITOR



MEGAN ZAMORA
Editor, Creek Corner

“It’s Wednesday, a week after the magazine deadline, and I’m just now feeling creatively inspired to write this article. Much to my chagrin, my project manager, Katie, has lit a fire under my hind end, and somehow, that has the creative juices flowing. Yesterday, we had a communications team meeting where we jokingly figured out our work “familial” relationships.

For me, Katie is my “work sister.” She keeps me on track, publicly and privately. We bicker at meetings and we butt heads on nearly every project we work together on at least once. It’s our love language. But, it works for us...really well. It keeps us both honest, on our toes, and forces us to examine a different perspective.

Sharon is my “work aunt,” and we have a shared history and connection that only time can cultivate. With her years of public relations experience, she has an easy laugh and a beautiful smile. When she comes into my office, I know it’s time for me to take a break, smell the roses, and connect with humans again...and I need that.

Kim is the department’s “work cousin” who keeps everyone’s secrets and somehow manages to not take sides in disputes while still making you feel like she’s really heard you. It’s an amazing gift.

I could keep going, but you get the drift... we’ve created our own little work community that’s become the equivalent of our family. And goodness, we might as well considering all the time we’ve spent with each other over the many years we’ve been working here at Poarch.

In another meeting with the THPO and Cultural teams, -yesterday was the day of the back-to-back meetings that I felt would never end...I think I had a total of five!- we were planning a mound sites video and the words community, connection, and

culture continued to surface in the conversation. My colleague, Larry, said something that was truly poetic. In essence, he shared that although it may only be a thread, we still have that cultural connection to the people - our people - who were born, lived, and died at those mound sites. They had a complex, advanced society and built these amazing structures that literally elevate you to a place that is closer to our Creator. And, they had communities there; social connections that make you feel part of something greater than yourself.

Community is something that our Mississippian era ancestors and Creek Nation forefathers lived every day. It was a means of survival because they understood that we aren’t meant to walk this earth alone. We’re meant to be connected, and that connectedness built community that ensured we would be here today. They had communal gardens so that everyone was able to eat. They shared in struggles, work, social recreation, and religious practices. This community connectedness is inherent in who we are as Creek people.

Even today, we have community gardens so no one goes hungry here, and many of us play together, work together, worship together, grieve together, and celebrate together. Our community is an integral part of our culture, and we are still a community of people who are connected, no matter our location, by this place called Poarch.

I encourage you all to embrace your community and find ways to come together not only during times of sorrow, but during all the times of our lives.

“We’re meant to be connected, and that connectedness built community that ensured we would be here today.”



TRIBAL LEADERS

The mission of the Poarch Band of Creek Indians is to protect our inherent rights as a sovereign American Indian Tribe, promote our culture and beliefs, to help our Tribal Members 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.

We bring a reservoir of expert knowledge to secure the health, education and well-being of all Tribal Members today and in the future. We act as role models who go beyond the call of duty and leaders who instill confidence in the fairness and wisdom of government decisions and actions.

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



FROM OUR LEADERS

STEPHANIE BRYAN: COMMUNITY UPDATE



esci! Hello!

I hope this message finds you all in good spirits and health. As I sit at the helm of our proud and historic Tribe, I am filled with an overwhelming sense of honor, responsibility, and aspiration. My role as your Tribal Chair is not just a position, but a sacred duty that I have embraced with all my heart.

**“
My role as
your Tribal
Chair is
not just a
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embraced
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my heart.”**

Our Tribe has journeyed through time, weathering challenges and basking in victories. Our ancestral legacy, rich in tradition and wisdom, forms the bedrock on which we stand today. This legacy is a testament to our resilience, unity, and indomitable spirit. As we move forward, it is my pledge to ensure that our traditions are upheld, our rights are protected, and our futures are filled with opportunities.

Below are a few important benefit and program updates:

- We are excited to announce that the Fred L. McGhee Early Learning Center has expanded to cater to the diversified needs of the Poarch Creek Community.

- Marking a significant milestone, our First Generation Health Clinic is now open and ready to serve.

- To make healthcare more accessible, we've introduced a Co-Pay Assistance Program for Tribal Members residing outside the designated service area.

- Recognizing the needs of our Tribal Elders, we have launched the Public Works Elder Assistance Program.

- Tribal Member Elders can now receive \$600 quarterly to assist with Medicare/Insurance premiums, reducing their financial burden.

- In a move to further support housing development for our Tribal Members, we have increased the TAHO allotment.

- In recognizing the urgent financial needs that sometimes arise in our community, we are revisiting the

parameters and provisions of the Crisis Loan Program to make it more responsive and accessible.

- Education is the backbone of growth and prosperity. We are in the process of refining the Tuition Assistance Program to better support both Tribal Members and First Generation Descendants in their educational endeavors.

- Understanding the vital role of child care in the lives of many Tribal Members, we are reviewing and updating our Child Care Program to ensure it caters efficiently to the needs of our Tribal children and their guardians.

- Financial well-being is crucial for overall prosperity. That's why, in collaboration with the Accounting department, we are launching a new initiative – the Credit Repair Program. This program aims to assist Tribal Members in enhancing their credit scores, paving the way for greater financial stability and opportunities.

- We are currently considering a comprehensive insurance coverage plan for every Tribal Member, ensuring everyone's health and well-being.

- Plans are underway to develop a dedicated program focused on long-term and memory care for our Tribal Elders.

- We are exploring the possibility of enhancing our emergency response capabilities with Advanced Life Support Services through the Tribal Emergency Services Department.

- The upcoming SAIL Event Center is in the works and will be a space designed to host and celebrate our community's events and functions.

- Reflecting our community's rich heritage, the construction of the Cultural Arena is in progress.

- To cater to our community's dietary needs and preferences, a state-of-the-art Meat Processing Plant is under construction.

In closing, I want you all to know that I am here to serve, to listen, and to act. My door is always open, and my heart is always receptive. Together, as one Tribe and one family, let's embark on this journey, ensuring that our legacy remains shining brightly for all the generations yet to come.

DIVISION SPOTLIGHT

GOVERNMENT & PUBLIC AFFAIRS

By Ashlee Mothershed

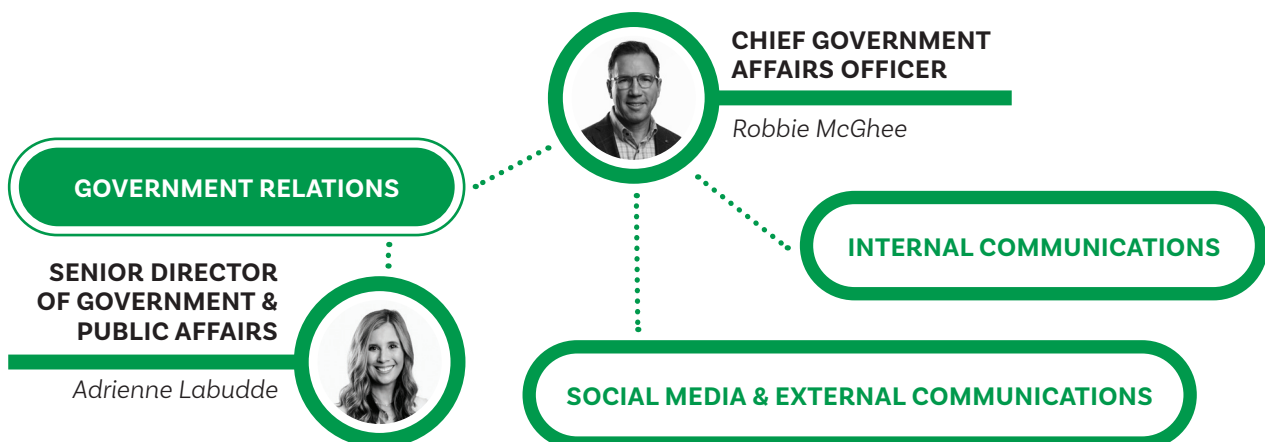


In an era where the dynamics of public policy, governance, and societal engagement are more complex than ever, the role of the Government & Public Affairs Office (GPAO) stands out as critical. Bridging the gap between government, organizations, and the public, this office plays a pivotal role in shaping opinions, policies, and outcomes. The GPAO is a specialized unit within the Poarch Band of Creek Indians Tribal Government that is responsible for managing its interactions and relationships with government bodies, key stakeholders (Tribal community), and the public. It is tasked with monitoring legislative activities, influencing public policy, and representing the organization's interests at different levels of government.

The core functions of this office include:

Policy Advocacy
Stakeholder Engagement
Public Communications
Monitoring & Analysis
Strategic Planning

In conclusion, the Government & Public Affairs office is not just a conduit between the Poarch Band of Creek Indians and the general public, it's a strategic unit that shapes, directs, and responds to the ever-evolving interplay of business, governance, and society.





DEPARTMENT SPOTLIGHT

GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

By Ashlee Mothershed

In our rapidly changing political and regulatory environment, the relationship between government entities and the Poarch Band of Creek Indians is of paramount importance. At the heart of this dynamic is the Government Relations Department (GRD).

The GRD is the unit within the Poarch Band of Creek Indians dedicated to managing its interactions with government bodies at various levels, be it local, state, or federal. This department is responsible for ensuring that our interests are represented and protected in the face of evolving legislation and regulations.

It takes charge of promoting or opposing legislative measures

that affect the Poarch Band of Creek Indians. Through lobbying, the department communicates the organization's stance and seeks to influence legislation in a direction favorable to our interests. The department also monitors and analyzes emerging laws, regulations and policy trends, assessing potential impacts on our Tribe.

Through proactive advocacy, relationship building, and strategic insight, the GRD plays a pivotal role in ensuring that our Tribe not only adapts to but thrives amidst changing political landscapes.



My Cell Number Has Changed!

Jessica Ascott-Williams

Soil Conservationist - Tribal Conservationist
Natural Resources Conservation Service

5535 Poarch Road
Atmore, AL 36502
www.nrcs.usda.gov

Cell Phone: 334-658-1576
jessica.ascott@usda.gov

Tribal office is open from 8:30 am- 4:30 pm, Monday through Friday. Closed on Holidays.

***Will be closed during field visits and while servicing surrounding counties. Please call to schedule an office appointment or field visit.**



JUSTINE SWINDELL: THE ARTIST BEHIND THE POARCH NEIGHBORS “OUR STORY” ILLUSTRATIONS

By Jamie Sawyer

Storytelling has always been the thread that holds cultures together. Oral tradition, passed down from one generation to the next, provides continuity to a community and helps define the individual identities of its members. Visual storytelling has an even greater power to

spark curiosity about a culture and opens the door to true understanding and acceptance of a people.

Justine Swindell understands that more than most artists. Holding a Masters in Sociology, she approaches each project with the spirit of a researcher. When national brands latched onto the idea of storytelling as a means to create more loyal communities of customers, Justine was well positioned to create art that added dimension to those brands. Her work diverged from the mass advertising we all see and focused on understanding why specific communities held an affinity for the brand.

Needless to say, her work for those brands effectively struck a chord that mainstream advertising did not.

When she decided to pursue the field of commercial illustration, Justine saw the opportunity to apply her discipline to causes and cultures that needed a voice. As she puts it, "When a culture is unseen, or unheard, it cannot achieve the connection needed for understanding."

When the Poarch Creek Indians approached Justine to help tell the story of the Tribe, she wanted to immerse herself in the cultural traditions that

bind the Members together. That research helped her better understand the relationships the Tribe has had with its neighbors throughout history and today. It also gave her fresh insight into the dynamics of the Tribe's relationships today. Only after she developed this foundational understanding did she begin to sketch.

For many of the causes and communities she has worked with, there is either a lack of awareness or a preconceived notion of their stories. Her goal to help the unseen be seen begins with truth and humanity. She feels that if she can visually tell the true essence of a story in a way that awakens common human emotions, it will create the awareness and shift in understanding that bring people together.

The scenes she created to tell the Tribe's story capture aspects of the culture that Poarch shares with its neighbors. The story is one of unity. It depicts how Poarch is one with the land, one with family, and one with its neighbors. While the style may be described as bold and abstract, the elements are familiar. In a single scene, a viewer understands what makes the Tribe unique while also better understanding the values held in common.

This was Justine's first time working with an Indian Nation. When she shifted gears to more cause-related storytelling, most of her initial efforts focused on communities that were more familiar to her. She sees a commonality between those causes and the Tribe's efforts. She says, "In both cases, there is a human desire to be seen. To connect on a deeper level. To understand each other."





STUDY: NATIVE APPROPRIATION PREVALENT, HURTFUL

By Kevin Abourezk

*Study surveyed
600 Native people,
finding most oppose
appropriation of their
culture and identities
and feel angry and
sad when they
encounter it.*

Researchers interviewed 600 Native people and discovered what most Native people know already: Native Americans oppose the appropriation of their cultures and identities and feel angry and sad when they see it happen.

To be fair, the study – which appeared in the “Ethnic and Racial Studies” journal in an article entitled “Native Voices on Native Appropriation” – is considered one of the first to interview actual Native people about the topic of appropriation. Researchers defined Native appropriation as when non-Natives use Native cultures and



“We conclude that this appropriation operates as microaggressions, which generate a hostile climate for Native Americans.”

identities for their own purposes (think “Indian princess” costumes at Halloween and Native sports mascots).

Researchers surveyed Native American people from 112 federally recognized tribes and 11 state-acknowledged tribes. They examined the impact of appropriation of Native cultures and identities, and even offered a few recommendations on how to end Native appropriation.

The Native Voices on Native Appropriation Research Project conducted the research, which found that those interviewed experienced incidents of Native appropriation once a month on average. Most of those surveyed said they perceived acts of appropriation as oppressive, disrespectful and ignorant.

“We conclude that this appropriation operates as microaggressions, which generate a hostile climate for Native Americans,” researcher wrote in a press release about the study.

Acts of Native appropriation include non-Natives dressing up as “Indians” for Halloween, selling sweat lodge ceremonies, falsely claiming Native ancestry, or calling themselves tribal names at Boy Scout camp. Others use Native American imagery to sell products (like Indian Motorcycles) or misuse Native American terminology (like calling a business meeting a “powwow”).

The five types of appropriation that were most objectionable were: having no ancestry but claiming to be Native American; wearing Native regalia or ceremonial clothing; selling Native spiritual items or ceremonies; dressing like a Native (such as for a party or in school);

manufacturing and selling items that are associated with Native Americans but that were not made by Native Americans; and using phrases in everyday language that reference Native American cultures.

The survey presented participants with a list of 26 possible reasons why they might view Native appropriation as harmful. Those surveyed agreed with nearly all of the reasons.

The most commonly endorsed reasons were: Native appropriation reflects and reinforces stereotypical beliefs about Native people; Native appropriation portrays Native Americans as all the same — obscuring individual and tribal differences; Native cultures are turned into saleable commodities for profit; and Native appropriation is disrespectful of Native American spiritual beliefs and practices.

“Thus, it is clear that Native appropriation creates a hostile climate,” researchers said. “Based on these findings, we recommend action to address and eliminate Native appropriation.”

Researchers recommended that tribal nations be consulted when making decisions about Native issues, and they cited several Native organizations that could be consulted to avoid Native appropriation, including the National Congress of American Indians, Native American Journalists Association and IllumiNative.

Francine Compton, associate director of the Native American Journalists Association, said her organization has worked for years to train and support Native storytellers in order to ensure Native stories are told accurately and authentically. She said NAJA also supports Indigenous-owned and -operated media outlets.

“They’re showing others by example how to do the best reporting,” she said. “If it’s about us, then it should be for us and by us.”

She cited as an example the reporting of the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network in Canada and its work revealing a practice in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan by police called the “starlight tours,” whereby police would leave intoxicated Natives on the outskirts of town. Several Native men were left at night in freezing temperatures and died.

“We took those stories seriously that we were hearing from people, and we started reporting on stories on a larger scale and that drew attention to the stories,” she said.

She said NAJA also has championed the establishment of Indigenous affairs desks at mainstream media outlets, though she said only a handful of such desks exist today. She said non-Native journalists must work to establish relationships with the Indigenous communities they are covering, rather than visit those communities only when bad things happen.

“People can feel like that is a form of appropriation, too,” Compton said. “That’s why it’s really important to take time and build those relationships.”

She urged non-Native journalists to also be willing to ask Native sources about their family, including who their parents and grandparents are and what Indigenous communities they call home. She said those questions ensure non-Native journalists are talking to actual Native people, not people posing as Natives, but those questions can also add greater depth to stories about Indigenous people.

“That is part of storytelling,” she said. “It’s not unethical to ask those questions.”

She said media coverage that only focuses on negative issues affecting Native communities or perpetuates stereotypes about Indigenous people can impact Native youth, who already deal with high rates of suicide and depression.

“The reporting on our people should be uplifting our youth, empowering our communities, educating them and showing them that journalism can change their lives for the better,” Compton said.

She said NAJA has several programs designed to encourage and train Native people, including young people, who are interested in becoming storytellers. The organization also works to support investigative journalists who are Indigenous.

“We’re here to shine this light and say, ‘Hey, here’s this beacon that is journalism and you have every right to tell stories because it’s our inherent right as Indigenous people to tell stories,’” she said. “Our ancestors told stories. They passed those stories down to us.”



“
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Lashay Wesley, director of communications and storytelling at IllumiNative, said her organization also has worked to dispel harmful stereotypes of Native people and to stop appropriation of Native cultures and identities.

She said IllumiNative was founded on a body of research known as Reclaiming Native Truth, which found that the modern form of racism that Native people endure is invisibility. In America, 78 percent of people know little to nothing about Native people, said Wesley, who is Choctaw.

“Native appropriation, it’s rooted in colonialism,” she said. “It’s rooted in white supremacy. It perpetuates our erasure and leads to the oppression of Native peoples.”

IllumiNative seeks to create “contemporary, authentic stories” of Native people in order to prevent inauthentic, inaccurate portrayals from cropping up and perpetuating toxic stereotypes and appropriation of Native people, she said.

She credited the Native Voices on Native Appropriation Research Project for conducting the research, which she described as one of the first studies to interview Native people about the topic of Native appropriation. The research team included two Native researchers: Adrienne Keene, Cherokee, and Desi Small-Rodriguez, Northern Cheyenne.

“It’s really important to see Native people doing this research and actually engaging with Native participants, who are able to voice their concern,” she said.

One of IllumiNative’s campaigns is ending the use of Native mascots. Wesley cited two recent sports team name changes as victories for Native organizations dedicated to ending the use of Native mascots: the Cleveland baseball team changing its name to the Guardians and the Washington NFL team changing its name to the Commanders.

Wesley said there are still many sports teams with problematic names and mascots.

“I want to see a future where there are zero Native mascots, that our imagery isn’t appropriated, that our traditions aren’t appropriated,” she said. “We’re not going to stop fighting until that goal is reached.”

She said she would like to see additional research conducted that looks at people’s changing attitudes toward Native appropriation, as well as research that examines the impact of such appropriation on Native children.

“There’s certainly more in the research space that can be done,” Wesley said.

Another campaign that IllumiNative has spearheaded is an effort to educate those in the entertainment industry about Native appropriation and stereotypes. The organization has created an entertainment industry guide that lays out toxic Native stereotypes and what Native appropriation is and how to avoid it.

IllumiNative also has launched a program that works to promote Native producers and writers in the entertainment industry. She said the entertainment industry benefits from the inclusion of Native producers and writers, as evidenced by the critical acclaim of such TV shows and movies as “Reservation Dogs” and “Prey.”

“We can’t live in this system where you’re creating Native stories without us,” she said. “There’s no story without us. We need that narrative sovereignty.”

“

I want to see a future where there are zero Native mascots, that our imagery isn’t appropriated, that our traditions aren’t appropriated. We’re not going to stop fighting until that goal is reached.



KEVIN ABOUREZK
Deputy Managing Editor
ICT News



POARCH 101

THE MIGRATION STORY

Excerpt from *Woven Together, The Story of the Poarch Band of Creek Indians*

The Creek Indians are a deeply spiritual people, and this is reflected in the Tribe's history. It is said that, centuries ago, our ancestors came from the west, descending from the mountains. The Creator sent down a cedar pole and instructed our people to stand the pole upright and travel in the direction it fell. They followed it for countless days and nights as, each day, the pole fell east. Finally they reached the coast with an endless ocean before them. They asked the Creator if they were to live here and were told to follow the pole one more day and night. The pole fell to the west and they followed. At dawn they discovered a rich and fertile land, teeming with life. The sacred pole stood upright. They had reached their home.



At dawn they discovered a rich and fertile land, teeming with life. The sacred pole stood upright. They had reached their home.

The Creek Indians, along with other southeastern tribes such as the Choctaws and Cherokees, are descended from the peoples of the Mississippian period (circa AD 800-1500). In the 16th century, the arrival of European settlers brought epidemics, violence and unrest to the southeast United States, resulting in a scattering of the region's indigenous peoples. In the 17th century, these diverse populations joined together and established settlements along the central Chattahoochee River, the lower Tallapoosa River and the central Coosa River in what is now east-central Alabama. For the next two centuries, these areas were the heart of what became the Creek Nation, and these new towns ("etvlwv" in the Muskogean language of the Creeks) became the centers of Creek political and ceremonial life.

PODCAST

POARCH STORIES

By Ashlee Mothershed

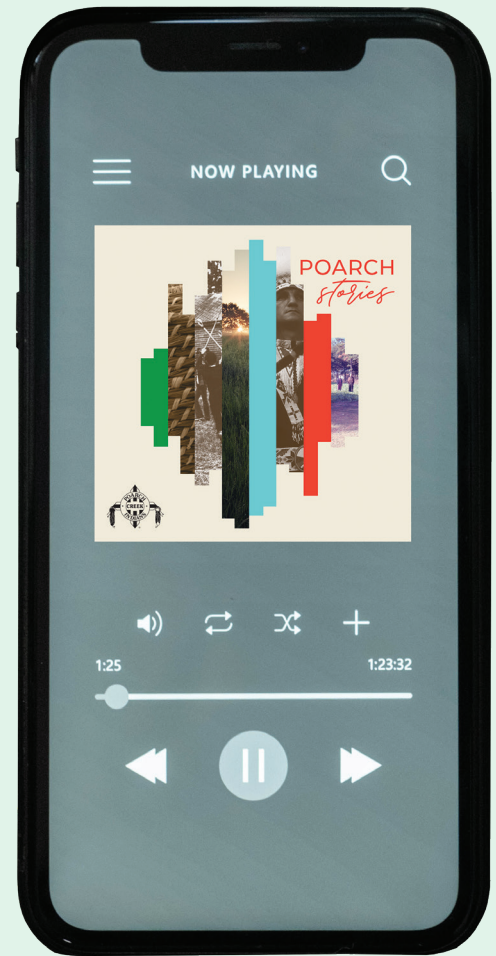
Welcome to Poarch Stories, a journey through the rich and diverse history of the Poarch Band of Creek Indians. Each episode takes a deep dive into the traditions, cultures, and historical events that shaped our Tribe. From the Mississippian Era to the modern day Poarch Creek Indians, join our hosts as they uncover the stories, struggles, and triumphs of our ancestors, whose legacy continues to resonate today. Whether you're a history buff or simply curious about the Poarch Creek Indians or Native history in general, Poarch Stories offers an exploration of a history too often overlooked.

Dive into the rich tapestry of Poarch Stories, as we unravel tales from the Poarch Consolidated Schoolhouse. Our guests share their personal memories of the schoolhouse, taking each listener on a journey into the heart of the Poarch Creek community. You can listen on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, or wherever you get your podcasts.

LIST OF EPISODES

Mississippian Era
Emerging Nations
Creek War (3 parts)
Early Poarch Creek Way of Life
The Churches that Made Poarch
Consolidated Schoolhouse Series

Scan the
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Coffee...

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You are
invited
to get
to know
our Tribal
Police
over a
cup of
coffee.



Join us Sept. 15th at the Diner!



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- ✓ Fuel
- ✓ Drinks
- ✓ Beer/Wine
- ✓ Discount Tobacco
- ✓ Great Destination



Fried Chicken & Eggs



4740 Jack Spring Rd. Atmore



OWA's

Fun Filled Fall

Go big with the Labor Day Weekend celebration at OWA—from the car show to the fireworks spectacular, this annual event is a family favorite. Bring your group back to OWA Island for FREE family movie nights, Saturdays beginning 9/16. The entertainment just keeps getting better all season long with OWA Theater's line-up including epic tributes to bands like the Eagles, Metallic and Tom Petty—plus the interactive "Hypnaughty" and an evening with rising country star Tyra Madison. Plan your fall of fun at VisitOWA.com!

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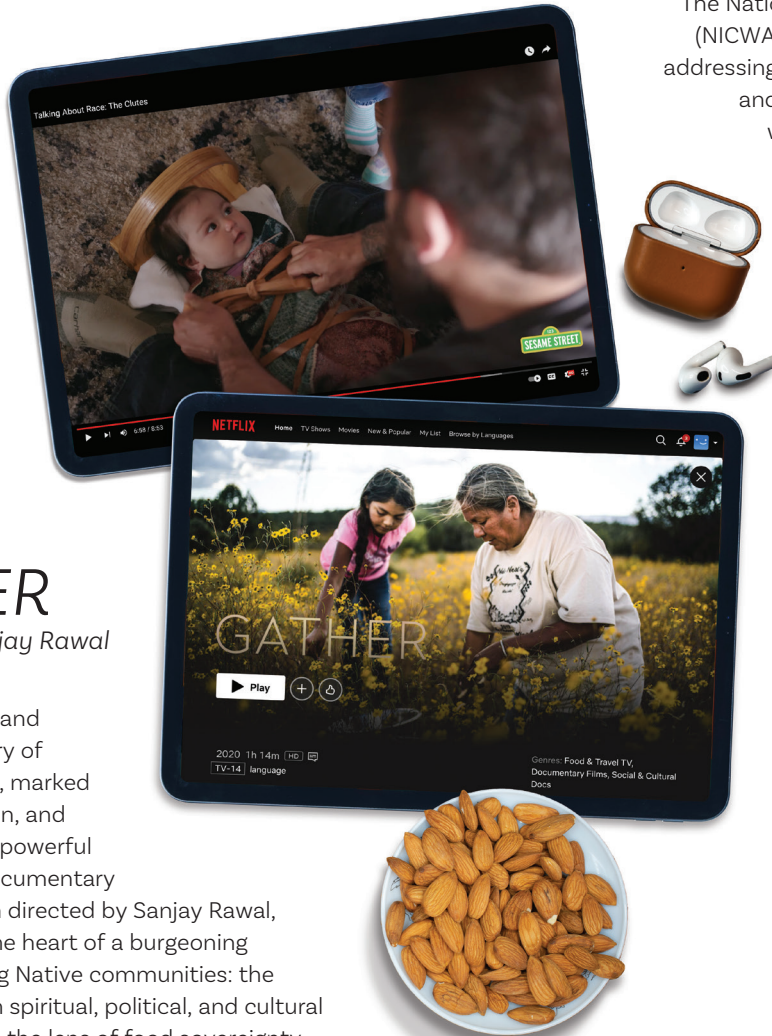
FOR KIDS

NICWA PARTNERSHIP WITH SESAME WORKSHOP

The National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA) has always been at the forefront of addressing the unique needs of Native children and families. One of the most impactful ways NICWA has been able to do this is through its collaboration with Sesame Workshop, formerly known as Sesame Street in Communities. This union has created a platform to shed light on the traditions, stories, and teachings of Native children and their families in a way that is accessible and relatable for all audiences.

The relationship between NICWA and Sesame Workshop is more than just a partnership; it is a reflection of shared values and the mutual goal of creating a world where children, irrespective of the cultural backgrounds, are seen, celebrated, and given tools to flourish.

To watch on YouTube,
scan the QR code below.



FOR ADULTS

GATHER

Directed by Sanjay Rawal

The profound and tumultuous history of Native Americans, marked by loss, adaptation, and resilience, finds a powerful medium in the documentary “Gather”. This film directed by Sanjay Rawal, dives deep into the heart of a burgeoning movement among Native communities: the journey to reclaim spiritual, political, and cultural identities through the lens of food sovereignty. “Gather” is a testament to the indomitable spirit of Native Americans. It serves as a poignant reminder of the painful history endured by indigenous communities while showcasing the innovative ways they are weaving threads of recovery, resilience, and rebirth.

For those seeking a profound cinematic experience that transcends entertainment, “Gather” offers an evocative journey into the soul of Native America. It is not just a documentary it’s a movement. Through the stories of Craig Dubray, and the Ancestral Guard, the film beckons viewers to acknowledge, understand, and support the quest of Native Americans to reclaim their rightful place in the narrative of the land they’ve cherished for so long.

Available to watch on Netflix.

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 Megan Zamora at
mzamora@pci-nsn.gov.**



DOWNTOWN OWA GROWS WITH FIVE NEW BUSINESSES OPENING THEIR DOORS

By Catherine Hasty



OWA Parks & Resort is thrilled to announce the opening of several new businesses to Downtown OWA, the admission-free shopping, dining, and entertainment district of the property. After a fun day of thrills at Tropic Falls, OWA's amusement and water park, there's no better place to relax and unwind than the pedestrian friendly streets of Downtown OWA.

"We are excited to see Downtown OWA thrive and offer more options for our guests," said Kristin Hellmich, Director of External Communications, Poarch Band of Creek Indians. "These new businesses help continue our goal of expanding our offerings and keeping visitors coming back to OWA. We are also glad to be able to accommodate these new businesses as space on the property is near capacity."

New openings include Gussies, a family restaurant in the heart of Downtown OWA, which offers a variety of menu options including naan bread chicken pizza, shrimp baskets, pulled pork sandwiches, and an array of delicious sides. And Starbucks is now bringing its signature coffee, teas, and pastries to the small-town streets of Downtown OWA.

Toys Under Twenty is a new shop that offers a selection of toys, games, and activities all under \$20. The store features its resident reader, Shroomy, a mushroom that loves to read and share books with kids. Toys Under Twenty has a Little Free Library where kids are encouraged to take a book and share one. There is also a spot for teachers to stop by and stock up on classroom supplies at the lowest rates.

The newly opened Vacay Everyday Boutique is a go-to destination for quality on-trend clothing, shoes, accessories, and gift items. Vacay Everyday seeks to help bring a little bit of the vacay-feeling to every day.

Lastly, OWA also welcomes Slappin' Daks, a frozen daquiri shop offering an assortment of tasty flavors and unique

frozen beverages, topped with candy treats. In addition to their traditional daquiris, they also offer non-alcoholic options.

As Downtown OWA continues to grow, leasing opportunities are limited.

For more information,

contact Stirling Properties at 251-375-2481 or visit <https://visitowa.com/leasing-in-owa/>. And for all the latest information and events at OWA Parks & Resort, visit www.visitowa.com.

From new restaurants to boutique shops and toy stores, Downtown OWA continues to offer something for everyone.



WIND CREEK ARUBA HOLDS 5TH ANNUAL CULINARY CHARITY EVENT, LONG TABLE ARUBA

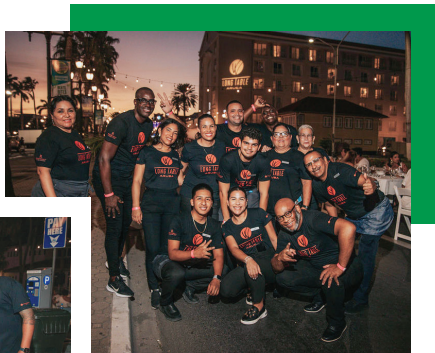
By Amelia Tognoli

D

uring the summer, Wind Creek Aruba concluded its 5th annual culinary charity event celebration, Long Table Aruba. Billed as “the only meal worth \$50,000 for Aruba,” Long Table Aruba featured a white-hot dinner for guests during which Wind Creek gave a total of \$60,000 in community impact donations.

This year’s online video contest included over 40 organizations representing Animal Care, Caregiving Services, Health & Wellness, Humanities & Arts, and Youth Education—five charities (one from each category) were awarded \$10,000 each. Members of the public, co-workers, family, friends and the community reviewed dozens of video submissions by local organizations and voted for their favorite video.

“At Wind Creek Aruba, we’re honored to recognize the incredible local organizations that are constantly striving to better our island,” said Paul Gielen, General Manager of Wind Creek Aruba. “This event gave us an opportunity to not only enjoy a memorable evening, but to also say thanks to hundreds of community leaders who give their time and effort to support our Aruban community each day.”



The 2023 Long Table Aruba Video Contest Winners are as follows:

ANIMAL CARE

Stichting Turtugaruba

CAREGIVING SERVICES

Stichting Micky’s Foundation Aruba

HEALTH & WELLNESS

Grupo Curason Jong Paradera

HUMANITIES & ARTS

Creative Arts Aruba Stichting

YOUTH EDUCATION

SC United

In celebration of the sixth anniversary of its acquisition of Renaissance Aruba, Wind Creek Hospitality also awarded \$10,000 to a sixth organization, Brighter Future Academy Foundation, receiving the next highest number of votes across all categories.

Gielen added, “We’re fortunate to have a devoted Wind Creek Aruba team that came together to produce an exceptional event that honors and champions our local Aruban community. The spirit of giving was infectious, and we hope to have left a positive impact on all attendees, from guests to team members and sponsors. We look forward to supporting and amplifying the voices of our local charities and organizations in the years to come.”

FALL KICK OFF AT OWA

By Catherine Hasty

S

ay hello to a Fun Filled Fall at OWA Parks and Resort! OWA has various activities planned and excitement for the whole family to enjoy as the cooler temperatures come rolling in.

Relax into a tropical vibe at the new Tropic Hideaway RV Resort, now open at OWA! The 190-lot luxury RV Resort has everything you want. Whether you choose a back-in, pull-through, or premium site, enjoy a full complement of amenities like an open-air clubhouse, separate adult and family swimming pools, pickleball courts, putting green, a dog park, and a cardio-focused fitness center. To book your next stay, visit TropicHideaway.com.

Kick off the Fall with us at Labor Day Weekend Party on September 1-3! Start the weekend on Friday, September 1, with a scavenger hunt and kid's crafts in Downtown OWA. At 5 pm, come hungry and check in for the hot dog eating competition beginning at 7 pm on OWA Island. Can you eat ten hot dogs the fastest?

Returning for its sixth year, the OWA Labor Day Car Show is back on Saturday, September 2! During this picturesque autumn event, cars of all makes and models will be on display throughout the charming streets of Downtown OWA. With hot rods and custom builds from all decades lining the streets, this car show is bound to have something that catches your eye! Stick around after the Car Show on Saturday, September 2, for kid activities and a live outdoor concert! Join us on OWA Island for live music from Stormfolk at 6 pm and the Ryan Dyer band at 8 pm. Round off the night with epic fireworks at 8:50 pm. This patriotic show can be seen throughout the entire property.

On Sunday, we won't be slowing down the fun! There will be kid activities at Tropic Falls and a complimentary American Flag Handprint T-shirt activity in the Native Treasures Alcove. More live music will follow, starting at 5:00 pm with Funky Lampshades. Closing out the night, Ben Loftin & the Family will be performing a live blend of pop, funk, reggae, and soul. So grab a cozy flannel, enjoy the fall weather, and catch them both at the Island Stage!



*...cars of all makes
and models will
be on display
throughout the
charming streets of
Downtown OWA.*

Plan a day of fall fun at OWA and top off the evening with a free movie at OWA Island Amphitheater on select Saturdays in September. Arrive early for themed activities from games to crafts and even prizes! Bring a chair, blanket, or towel, and

enjoy the evening outdoors on the lawn. Check out the complete lineup of family-friendly films and activities at VisitOWA.com.

From tribute bands to comedy shows, there is no better place to enjoy a night out than at OWA Theater. The lineup includes White Tie Rock Ensemble - A Tribute to The Eagles & Journey, Hardwired - A Tribute to Metallica, and Wildflowers - A Tribute to Tom Petty. OWA Theater will also have An Evening With Rising Country Star Tyra Madison. Tyra is rising to fame, becoming known for her vocals, songwriting, performing, and viral hit song "Right Girl Wrong Time." For 21+ audiences, OWA Theater will have several can't-miss Hypnaughty shows all month long! Get show times & details at VisitOWA.com!

Keep up with the latest news on events, entertainment, and activities, plus new tenant openings in Downtown OWA, via our website at VisitOWA.com or by following us on social media @VisitOWA.



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Stabler, Charlotte
Meckel, and
Stephanie Bryan.



CHARLOTTE MECKEL INDUCTED INTO POSITIVE MATURITY'S "TOP 50 OVER 50"

By Kristin Hellmich

The Poarch Band of Creek Indians is pleased to announce the induction of Charlotte "McGhee" Meckel into Positive Maturity's Top 50 over 50. The 2023 Top 50 over 50 honorees were recognized at the organization's gala event on Thursday night in Birmingham, Alabama.

Nominated by their fellow citizens, co workers, family and friends, these honorees are changemakers, and Meckel is no exception. Born and raised in the Poarch Community, Meckel has a dedication to and compassion for her fellow Tribal Members who live both on tribal lands and in other parts of the world. Meckel herself lived and worked for many years in Germany, and she is known for dealing with tribal issues with sharp mind and open heart – an approach that has a positive impact on Poarch's Tribal Members.

As a proud member of the Poarch Band of Creek Indians Tribal Council, Meckel is humbled to be following in the footsteps of her mother, the late Ernestine McGhee Daughtry, and her brother Jack Allen McGhee. She considers it an honor and privilege to serve her people by putting her education and vast knowledge and work experience to use on further diversifying the Tribe's economic opportunities. She is currently serving a third term as Tribal Council Secretary, is the Chair of the Records Committee and is part of the Tribe's Executive Committee.

"We are thrilled that our very own Charlotte Meckel is being recognized by Positive Maturity as a recipient of its prestigious "50 over 50" award", stated Tribal Chair & CEO, Stephanie A. Bryan. She continued," Charlotte exemplifies the concept of "positive maturity". She is a beloved leader in our Poarch community -- not only for her service as a Tribal Council member, but also because of her unwavering

faith in the future and the kindness she consistently shows others. I personally have always looked up to Charlotte, and I greatly value the contributions she has made to our Tribal government and to so many individuals and families in and around our home in Atmore."

The Top 50 over 50 event was created in 2014 by Positive Maturity to recognize older adults in the community who find opportunities to make a difference and become a catalyst in the world. As one of the first senior organizations established in Jefferson County, Ala., Positive Maturity was originally created to assess and meet the needs of the aging population.

"Every year we look forward to the night when we get to publicly recognize these outstanding citizens for their community and philanthropic achievements," said Penny Kakoliris, executive director. "It's full of fun and special memories.

Honorees are chosen based on one or more of the following: volunteer/civic engagement and community impact; business or lifetime of achievements; caregiving, medical or social impact; business or lifetime of achievements; caregiving, medical or social services professions; services professions; education or a lifetime of achievement in this category; individuals from Alabama who may no longer live in the state, but whose impact deserves recognition.

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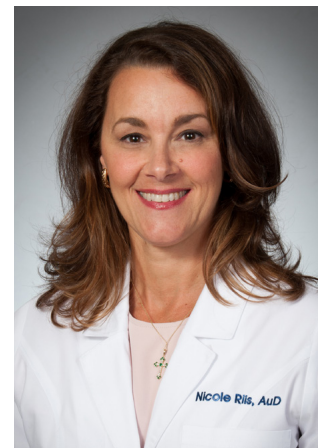
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Nicole Riis, Au.D., CCC-A, FAAA



GET BUSY LIVING

By Sharon Delmar

I had the privilege to sit down and talk with Mark McGhee, Poarch Creek Indian Tribal Member and his physician, Dr. Ted Woods. We discussed in depth Mark's health journey which included multiple surgeries and many obstacles he had to overcome.

I hope that as you read Mark's journey and his successful battle against obesity, that you are inspired by his story. At only 55 years of age, he has seen his fair share of tough days, and faced more surgeries than he cares to count. As Mark says, "It hasn't been easy and I have struggled everyday, but if I can inspire someone to let them know they can do it, then it has been worth it all."

Q. Dr. Woods I'd like to start with you, can you give us your background and tell us how long you've been a physician here with the Tribe?

A. Dr. Woods - I am actually a first generation Poarch Creek Indian, and started here back in the early 2010's. Before that I was practicing in New York City in the early 2000's. They built this beautiful health facility in 2012-2013, and I had moved back here to take care of my mother who was ill and she eventually moved into the assisted living facility here. I was only supposed to be temporary/short term, but once I got to meet all the Tribal Members and be reconnected with family members it was too difficult to leave. So I'm still here over ten years later.

Q. Mark, can you tell everyone how old are you and how much weight have you lost?

A. Mark - I am 55 years old and I have lost 247 pounds in 18 months

Q. You have had bariatric surgery, can you tell us what year you had it done?

A. Mark - It was back in August of 2021

Q. When did you notice you were starting to gain weight?

A. Mark - Well, it's really hard to know when it (the weight) was coming on, but it was a bad part of my life and I got depressed and didn't care. When it came on it just piled on and I got pretty heavy. Then I started having mobility problems, that's when I went to the doctor and they said I needed to have my hip replaced. About this time COVID started.

I had to lose 40lbs before they would do the bariatric surgery because they were afraid I wouldn't survive it. I lost 107 lbs. in 14 weeks on my own. Let me say my wife helped me and I couldn't have done it without her, she was cooking and feeding me the right foods. The doctor was shocked at how much weight I had lost, he said "you've lost more

weight than some of my patients who are a year out from having the surgery and it's only been 4 months. Are you sure you want to have the surgery?" I told him yes. At this time I was in a wheel chair, Dr. Woods had to get me a wheel chair because of my mobility. I couldn't walk more than 20 steps because of my weight.

Q. How did this affect your everyday life (being in a wheelchair)? What were your thoughts?

A. Mark - I had to scoot off of the wheelchair to the commode to go to the bathroom, them kind of things are an eye opening event, and I saw the things I was putting my wife through as my caretaker. If that doesn't get you nothing will, it was my motivation. I was maybe 52 years old at this time.

Q. So meanwhile you are working and have a family to support. When did you consider having bariatric surgery and had you been considering this for a long time?

A. Mark - Dr. Woods recommended I have it during this time, I've had so many complications and then there were the doctors that wouldn't treat me because of my weight. He's been my coach and I've quarterbacked so to speak, I couldn't have done it without his direction.

Dr. Woods - Mark is being modest about this from when we met and what I've seen. Since 2014 he had struggled with his weight, which was piling on and he couldn't walk without struggling for breath. There were roadblocks from different surgeons and he got the same answers that they wouldn't do the surgery (any surgery) on him because of how much he weighed and because he smoked at the time.

It took him to realize it had to be something he really wanted to do. Once he made his mind up to go forward, and because he was in a wheel chair or scooter to ambulate (he is a young man), he did it, God I'm so glad you did! He had the help of his wife and did it. I'd also like to add that

in early 2020 COVID strikes and puts a halt to everything. So Mark has come through having COVID, weight loss, hip replacement, and gallbladder surgeries. He's done all the hard work and what you see today it is just amazing.

Q. Mark decided to have bariatric surgery, Dr. Woods can you explain what he actually had done?

A. Dr. Woods - They go in and put a band, and band off your stomach. People eat for certain reasons some people eat for stress, or a variety of reasons. You have to go through a psychological assessment. After surgery you can only eat a small amount, and I think Mark was surprised how small amount you can eat, I mean it's a shock at how little you can do. It's not just that you have the surgery and you're done, you have to work on it. The band can stretch the stomach can stretch. You can gain a lot of that weight back, but Mark has incorporated walking and that's been important. He's young, has a job he wanted to keep and a beautiful life. Sharon - I've often heard it said that when you get bigger your life gets smaller.

Dr. Woods - I like that it's so true. I'm going to use that one!

Q. Mark, it's now (August 2021) and you've had the surgery how was your recovery?

A. Mark - Long. It's a daily battle after you have the surgery because you can't go back to the same lifestyle you've been living before or you'll put it (weight) back on. I had to get down to a certain weight because Dr. said you have to get to this certain weight to have the (hip replacement) surgery. So, once I had the gastric surgery then next the hips would be replaced. When you have hips replaced, you see they won't do that surgery if your BMI is so high because it won't do hips no good. I just never gave up.

Dr. Woods - I don't want it to sound like gastric bypass was the main thing it just helped him, because Mark had lost a lot of weight before this it just facilitated him have the surgeries he needed sooner.

Q. We all know it is important to have a support system when you are going through this type of surgery. Can you tell us about yours?

A. Mark - Dr. Woods was with me the whole time and I consider part of my family. And it was hard for me to see that I was putting the burden on my wife. I can't say enough for the people who helped me through this journey at my job at Wind Creek Casino and especially my wife. When you get to this weight and you have these goals you have to have these people to help keep you going.

Q. Have you reached your goal? Are you done yet?

A. Mark - I say no, I am at the weight I want to be at but I need to have skin removal surgery which would be the final step. It's something I need to have done.

Dr. Woods - You lost a whole person basically, an adult human. Mark still has some challenges to overcome, when you lose that much weight and have excess skin changes.

Mark - To put it in perspective, I went from wearing a size 66w to a 30w in pants and from a size 7x to a Large in a shirt, and could probably get into a smaller shirt if I had the

skin removal surgery done already. That's why I'm saying my story ain't done yet.

Q. We can see the outward journey but we know that not all the work is going to the gym or eating right. Can you tell us a little about the inward journey?

A. Mark - Whew! I don't know where to start with that. When you get to a ball game to watch your kids and you can't even get down to the ball game to watch them. I was missing out on everything, and those things stick with you. There's this line in the movie Shawshank Redemption, "Get busy living or get busy dying." I was dying, and all the doctors will tell you that I was dying. This became my motto, so I had to get busy living.

You have to have that determination to get there. It hasn't been easy and I have struggled everyday but if I can inspire someone to let them know they can do it, then it has been worth it all. There is light at the end of the tunnel.

Q. If you could go back and tell your younger self something what would you tell a younger Mark?

A. Mark - Oh Lord, when you are young you think it won't happen to me but well I didn't take care of myself like I should have. If you've got issues you've got to stay with it. Wake up! While you are young, exercise and eat right.

Dr. Woods - When we are young we think we are invincible. I actually use you as inspiration for my younger men to try to look at heading things off, and you are a good inspiration for me and why I am still here every day working for the Tribe. Stories like yours, it's what I tell people who smoke, until you make that decision it won't happen. You made a bunch of decisions like that and you are a great inspiration.

Q. Dr. Woods - do you have any advice for anyone in this similar situation?

A. Dr. Woods - You have to persevere. Don't give up and talk to your provider, they should be a partner and listen to you. It's so important to have that person should help guide and direct you in the right direction.

Mark - I couldn't have done it without Dr. Woods. When a door was shut he helped me, it was a partnership.

Q. Mark, you've been through so much and come such a long way. What last words would you like to share with everyone?

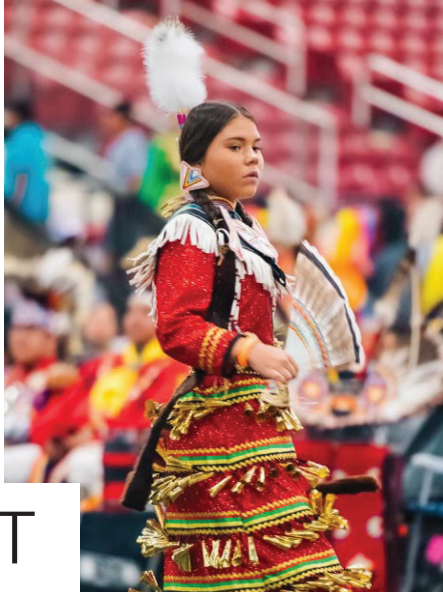
A. Mark - You are never promised tomorrow so live for today. I had so many doctors say, "I never thought I'd see you again". Don't take your health for granted. Hey, this doctor is telling you this is what you need to do, so don't ever give up and do it. Live for today and never take the people that you care about for granted, and you aren't promised tomorrow.

I hope this will inspire someone to make that change and that they can do it. I just thank God for everything because I couldn't have done it without Him.

A special thanks to both Mark McGhee and Dr. Ted Woods for their interview and speaking so candidly with me.

“
You have to
persevere.
Don't give
up and talk
to your
provider,
they should
be a partner
and listen
to you.”

26TH ANNUAL COUSHATTA POW WOW DANCE CONTEST WINNERS



PLACE	REG #	NAME	TRIBE
-------	-------	------	-------

JUNIORS | AGE 7-12

JR GIRLS' JINGLE

4th	108	Poarcha Bailey	Poarch Band of Creek Indians
3rd	129	Emily Howard	Yankton Sioux
2nd	106	Keshina Jack	Navajo Hopi Kiowa
1st	120	Ataya Little Sky	Mandan/Hidatsa/Arkaral Lakota

JUNIORS | AGE 13-17

TEEN BOYS' FANCY

4th	253	Braylon Snow	Poarch Band of Creek Indians
3rd	270	Chaske Hill	Rosebud Sioux Tribe
2nd	261	Darrell Hill Jr.	Oneida
1st	263	Liam Yazzie	Navajo

TEEN GIRLS' JINGLE

4th	203	Anna Peavy	Poarch Band of Creek Indians
3rd	208	Tahlula Screaming Eagle	Mandan Hidatsa
2nd	226	Danielle Baker	Navajo Apache MHA Nation
1st	221	Meah Little Sky	Mandan, Itidatsa, and Arikira

We are so proud of our Tribal Member and First Generation dancers that won.





ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM:

TRIBAL COUNCILMAN MR. JOHN REED, JR.

By Deidra Suwanee Dees, Ed.D.

Mr. John Reed identifies his family members from an archival image shown on the monitor by Digital Archivist Mr. Chad Parker

"We was poor and we didn't have nothing," Mr. John Reed, Jr. said as he recounted his childhood growing up in Monroe County for his interview. Mr. Reed participated in the Oral History Program interview in the Office of Archives and Records Management on June 8, 2023.

He was interviewed by Director/Tribal Archivist Dr. Deidra Suwanee Dees. Utilizing the Zoom computer software program, he was video recorded by Digital Archivist Mr. Chad Parker.

Despite being poor, Mr. Reed said he and his family worked very hard. He said he worked in the paper wood industry for many years, beginning right after he graduated from high school at J.U. Blacksher. At age seventy-three, he said he still works today.

He followed in the footsteps of his Uncle Artie Reed, he said, by serving on our Tribal Council in the 1970s under Chief Houston McGhee's leadership. At that time, the Tribe was called Creek Nation East of Mississippi. There were eighteen Tribal Council members, he said.

He remembered serving on the Tribal Council with Eddie Tullis, Roberta McGhee

Sells, and Buford L. Rolin. "I never missed a meeting," he said with pride.

He recalled helping with financial matters and assisting with the annual Pow Wows put on by the Tribe.

Before his service, he remembered, "They sold chicken plates to make money for Calvin to go to Washington." He said his Uncle Artie helped support Chief Calvin McGhee on his trips to Washington, D.C. in order to win the Eastern Creek Land Claims cases. He said he has photocopies of his personal land claims checks that he received based on the efforts of Chief McGhee and the Tribal Council.

When Chief McGhee died in 1970, Mr. Reed said his Uncle Artie was so torn up about it that he could no longer serve on the Council. He began his service on the Tribal Council in his uncle's place shortly thereafter, he said.

Do you know relatives whose history you would like to have recorded for our Oral History Program? If so, please call us at (251) 253-9181. We look forward to hearing from you. Mvto.

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POW WOW REGISTRATION

Registration is open for the 51st Annual Poarch Creek Indian Thanksgiving Pow Wow.

CRAFT VENDORS

Scan the QR code below to view the 2023 craft vendor application form. Deadline to apply for discounted rate is September 29, 2023.



FOOD VENDORS

Scan the QR code below to view the 2023 food vendor application and requirement form. Deadline to submit application is September 29, 2023.



DANCE CONTEST

Scan the QR code below to view the 2023 dance contest registration form. Registration is open until the day of the competition.



ROUNDHOUSE REMINDER

The Roundhouse is the Tribe's communication platform for Tribal Government Employees and Tribal Members to interact and share information with each other.

USERNAME: lastname + 5 digit Tribal Roll number
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Coffee...

Tribal Police will be with us on Sept. 15th, please join us!



You are invited to join our Tribal Police on Friday, September 15th, to speak onsite with our local law enforcement officers regarding any topics you wish.



4740 Jack Springs Rd. Atmore



LOVE WHERE YOU LIVE

The Poarch Band of Creek Indians Environmental Dept and PBCI Anti-Litter Committee Adopted the first mile on Tribal Campus. The mile starts approximately at the Museum to the Police Dept Training Center.

Several litter cleanup events are being scheduled for the year on campus and within the community. Everyone is invited to attend Anti-Litter Committee meetings or just volunteer in an event. If you are interested, please contact Kristi Weatherford, kweatherford@pci-nsn.gov or ext 2680 to be added to the distribution list.

Most importantly, "LOVE WHERE YOU LIVE" and Please do not litter.

INTERNATIONAL GIRL CROWNED

By Megan Gordon

Willow Rain Gordon, a 6 year old going into first grade at Perdido Elementary, along with her two sisters, Maggie and Lyric, competed in the week long International Girl competition. The International Girl pageant took place July 16th-21st in Orlando, Florida and is described as one of the most prestigious Youth Development Programs today.

The areas of competition included interview, onstage introduction, onstage interview, fun fashion, evening gown, and talent. Willow's category was petite, 4-6 years old, where she competed with girls from South Africa, Cayman Islands, Alabama, Missouri, Texas, Arkansas, Mississippi, Florida, and Louisiana. Willow was announced winner at the Thursday night finals as well as beautiful doll winner and photogenic winner. She will attend various events throughout the year with the organization and receive a scholarship at the end of her reign.

Her sister Lyric is the Alabama International Girl Little Miss and won the Little Miss Beauty at International. Her sister Maggie was the photogenic winner, first place in modeling, and 4th runner up in the Young Miss Category.



Above: Willow Rain Gordon



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Above: Megan Lopez and Family

NEW HOME- OWNER

By Shannon Peavy

*The Poarch Band
of Creek Indians
Housing Department
would like to
congratulate Megan
Lopez and her family*

for becoming a new homeowner
through the Tribally Assisted
Home Ownership (TAHO)
Program.



Government Relations
and Public Affairs Office

5811 Jack Springs Road
Atmore, AL 36502



CREEK CORNER

SEPTEMBER 2023 IMPORTANT DATES

9.1	SUBMISSION DEADLINE October Issue	5:00 PM
9.1	FARMER'S MARKET Beside Health Clinic	7:30-11:00 AM
9.5-9.6	MUSEUM GIFT SHOP CLOSED Inventory	
9.15	FARMER'S MARKET Beside Health Clinic	7:30-11:00 AM
9.21	TRIBAL COUNCIL MEETING TC Chambers	4:00 PM
9.27	FOOD DISTRIBUTION Parades Way (Follow Signs)	8:00 AM