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Chairman Osceola, Gov. DeSantis sign gambling agreement

Tribe set to play major role in sports betting

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

The Seminole Tribe and Gov. Ron DeSantis reached a long-awaited agreement April 23 for a new gaming compact which would bring sports betting to the state. The governor and Chairman Marcellus W. Osceola, Jr. signed the compact in Tallahassee.

In addition to offering craps and roulette at its casinos, the tribe will be able to conduct sports betting and license it to horse tracks, jai alai and dog tracks throughout the state. The tribe will receive a percentage of every sports bet placed.

If approved by Tribal Council, the Florida Legislature and the U.S. Department of the Interior, the state could receive at least \$2.5 billion from the tribe over the first five years, or \$500 million per year, and about \$6 billion by 2030. The Interior Department oversees Indian gaming through the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA).

"The Seminole Tribe of Florida is committed to a mutually-beneficial gaming compact with the State of Florida and looks forward to its approval by the Florida Legislature, the Seminole Tribal Council



Gov. Ron DeSantis, left, and Chairman Marcellus W. Osceola Jr. hold up the new gambling compact that they signed April 23.

and the U.S. Department of the Interior," Chairman Marcellus W. Osceola Jr. said in a statement. "The Tribe wants to express our sincere thanks to Governor DeSantis, Senate President (Wilton) Simpson, House Speaker (Chris) Sprowls and many others who have worked hard to negotiate a historic

agreement that cements our partnership with the state for decades to come."

The 30-year compact will be considered by the Legislature at a special session starting May 17.

The extensive 75-page compact allows sports betting in Florida to go through the

tribe, which will offer it to pari-mutuels. Sports betting includes any professional, Olympic or collegiate sport, motor sports event or individual performance statistics.

♦ See AGREEMENT on page 4A

HHS: Demand for vaccine slows

BY DAMON SCOTT
Staff Reporter

HOLLYWOOD — As the Seminole Tribe's Covid-19 vaccination program enters its fifth month officials say there aren't as many people asking for the shots.

Part of the reason is due to the success of the vaccine strategy's rollout and the hundreds who have already received the shot. The tribe's Health and Human Services (HHS) department and Public Safety staff have carried out the vaccine program through a phased eligibility process. The outreach and education to tribal members and the tribal community has been ongoing.

But Dr. Vandhana Kiswani-Barley, the executive director of HHS, said many have still not been vaccinated.

"The number of vaccines being requested has significantly declined," she said. "The community needs to remember that the vaccine is in place to reduce mortality and hospitalization."

As of late April, about 813 tribal members and those who live in tribal communities had received both doses of the vaccine. About 956 had received one dose. Among tribal employees, about 626 had received both doses and 755 had received one dose.

The tribe has three vaccines available — Moderna, Pfizer and Johnson & Johnson.

♦ See VACCINE on page 9A

Gathering of Nations bids farewell to Miss Indian World Cheyenne Kippenberger

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

After a historic two-year reign as Miss Indian World, Cheyenne Kippenberger stepped down during the virtual Gathering of Nations Powwow on April 24.

For the second year, Gathering of Nations was held online because of the pandemic. The event usually attracts about 3,000 dancers and 50,000 spectators to New Mexico, but this year everything, including the audience, was online.

About 15 emcees led the gathering and cued in participants from throughout Indian Country. First up were the Black Eagle singers from Montana, then the invocation by Bino Garcia and his young son Wasose, from the Pine Ridge Reservation.

"We had a very difficult year, send a helping hand grandfather," Garcia said. "Help us get back to our way of life, our ceremonies for celebration, prayer and happiness."

Other prayers and memorials followed. Arlie Neskahi, from the Coast Salish Tribe in Washington state, sang a song with his hand drum.

"This song sends a blessing to each and every one of you," Neskahi said. "This is about walking in beauty, it's a deep spiritual way we have that guides us to this day. As we walk on this earth, may we walk in beauty every day that we travel."

Shortly thereafter, the Miss Indian World farewell began. Kippenberger was the 36th Native woman to wear the crown and the first to serve for two years. During her first year as Miss Indian World, she traveled a lot. During the second year, not at all.

"For the first time since 1983, Miss Indian World will remain unfilled," said Kippenberger, a former Miss Florida Seminole and the first from the tribe to win MIW. "I had to find a new way to be Miss Indian World. I was through the roof ecstatic when they put the crown on my head and I am proud of being a Seminole woman. It was especially important to be authentic and real. I am also a regular Native woman."

The farewell was hosted by Canadian television producer Lisa Meeches, Ojibway from Long Plain First Nation. She explained that due to the pandemic, the Miss Indian World committee decided to wait until next year to hold another pageant.

"Cheyenne triumphed through the adversity of the pandemic," said Meeches,



Cheyenne Kippenberger poses with a cake made to commemorate her reign as Miss Indian World on April 24. The cake was made for her by chefs at Hard Rock and is topped with a replica of the intricately beaded crown. The cake was vanilla with raspberry filling and buttercream frosting underneath the lavender fondant icing.

as she introduced her and asked what she learned during her reign.

"It was easy to channel that resiliency because it's been in us since time immemorial," Kippenberger said. "I knew I had a responsibility to my tribe, my family and Indian Country. I knew what I had to do. The solution was to go back to the roots of who we are and to our teachings."

She said Miss Indian World was more than a competition; it was a bonding experience for all the contestants and she gave some advice to other girls who are thinking about competing for the crown next year.

♦ See MISS INDIAN WORLD on page 6A

Billie Swamp Safari strives to keep animals' lives normal in pandemic

BY BEVERLY BIDNEY
Staff Reporter

BIG CYPRESS — For the animals of Billie Swamp Safari, life in the Covid-19 pandemic goes on without visitors.

Throughout the yearlong pandemic while the park has been closed to visitors, BSS staff has been making sure the animals' lives are as normal as possible. They are cared for and fed. Routines are important so the animals can have a smooth transition whenever the 2,200-acre safari park on the Big Cypress Reservation reopens to visitors.

"The animals are doing fine," said Melissa Sherman, operations manager. "A year without people has impacted them, so we want to maintain our normal routines with the animals."

The animals in the safari area know where the feeding troughs are. Before the shutdown, the park started a program for guests to feed the animals on the buggy trail. They could purchase a bucket of feed and pour it into the trough from inside the safety of a swamp buggy.

"They could get super close to the animals," Sherman said. "We are keeping that routine with the staff doing it. The animals are living their best life, roaming free and getting food. Their biggest worry is

panthers."

Panthers live in the area, but their impact on the animals is minimal. Sometimes an animal will disappear and a panther is the likely suspect. A young donkey was rescued from the buggy trail a couple years ago after an encounter with what was probably a panther. It was nursed back to health and put into the petting zoo.

Caretakers in the park have detected a few behavior changes in some animals. Phil Blackwell, shift supervisor, has noticed some changes when he goes into the safari park to feed the animals.

"They are more spooked by the buggies because they don't see them as much," he said. "They aren't seeing people or traffic."

In the walkable portion of the park, the macaws began chewing on wood in their aviary. They were given enrichment toys to play with instead.

Visitors used to purchase birdseed on popsicle sticks and hand feed the buggies. When the pandemic ends, they will have to be retaught how to be fed by hand.

"We can't hand feed 100 buggies; we rely on visitors for that," Sherman explained.

♦ See SAFARI on page 5A



Before park attendant Yusdday Martinez can clean the enclosure for the Critter Show animals April 22, Francesca the capybara enjoys a belly rub while Bambi the deer tries to get some attention.

SEMINOLE TRIBE OF FLORIDA

AH-TAH-THI-KI

M U S E U M

A PLACE TO LEARN, A PLACE TO REMEMBER.

New acquisitions come with early 20th century stories

BY TARA BACKHOUSE
Collections Manager, Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum

BIG CYPRESS — As we move further away from 2020, the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum is happy to experience this bright new year and the opportunities that it brings. Two recent donations of historic pieces provide one such opportunity, the chance to connect beautiful creations of Seminole

artisans to early 20th century Seminole history. For these particular donations, we are lucky to know the stories of the people who got the pieces in Florida during the early 1900s and then returned them to the tribe in the early 2000s. The first objects, two skirts and two dresses, tell the story of a family on vacation in 1969 in Florida. Dorothy Pegues, the donor, was very young when her parents visited a village on the Tamiami Trail. Dorothy's mother wrote

detailed descriptions of the family's travels, and her description of that day includes:

"On Christmas day...we headed eastward across the Tamiami Trail through the Everglades. Many Seminole Indians live here and we stopped to visit one village. Two little Indian girls, about 7 and 10 years of age, acted as guides and although they were very poor by our standards, they were very happy. We asked an Indian woman how long it took to make a skirt or dress, but

Small dolls were typically attached to pieces of clothing with safety pins to provide decoration.

since she did not seem to understand, the little girls acted as interpreters. The answer was one week."

Dorothy's mother purchased the clothing from a gift shop on the way out of the village. From this family's experience, it's clear that the village they visited was used to visitors like them. The children were ready to act as tour guides and interpreters when needed, and there were souvenirs that could be purchased. This village was one of several on the newly built Tamiami Trail that was adjusting to a new way of life that depended on the interest and financial contributions of curious travelers driving between Naples and Miami. At other locations in Florida, artificial Seminole villages were opening, and these enterprises served solely to attract tourists by using aspects of Seminole culture, such as village life, artisanship, and alligator wrestling. Seminole families often travelled seasonally to such villages to make a living because their traditional way of life was rapidly disappearing. While some families eventually adjusted to this kind of lifestyle, many did not. It was not an easy time to thrive, and those that did are a testament to the ingenuity and resilience of the Seminole people.

The very small dolls recently donated tell a completely different story. They were donated by a great-granddaughter of Ethel Cutler Freeman. Freeman was an anthropologist from the American Institute of Anthropology at a time when very few women worked in that professional field.

She was best known for her work on the Big Cypress Reservation from 1940 to 1943. During that time she spent a lot of time getting to know the people of Big Cypress. In contrast to the camps on Tamiami Trail and the Seminole "villages" created for tourists, life on Big Cypress was not quite as involved in the tourist trade. Freeman encountered a community affected by the environmental changes of Everglades drainage projects as well as by increasing governmental regulations and assistance that interfered with traditional ways of life. These were problems that plagued all the Seminole reservations. The dolls are exquisite examples of the accomplished craftsmanship that could be found on Big Cypress and other Seminole reservations in the early 20th century. Like the clothing donation, palmetto fiber dolls were made in order to be sold to tourists. Therefore even though Big Cypress was not as central to the tourist trade, families there were involved in producing artistic goods and traveling to places on the coasts or on Tamiami Trail in order to sell them.

The Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum is here to share Seminole stories like these with the Seminole community and our audience around the world. Our collection of nearly 200,000 historic objects helps us to do this. If you would like to join us in this mission, let's talk about how you can be involved. While the museum is still closed to the public, we can be reached at museum@semtribe.com. Thank you!



These patchwork skirts and dresses were bought for four sisters between the ages 5 and 11 in December 1969.

Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum



Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum

Artist teams up with Miccosukee Tribe for Miami exhibit

BY DAMON SCOTT
Staff Reporter

MIAMI — The Pérez Art Museum Miami has announced a new exhibition that is heavily influenced by the Miccosukee Tribe.

"The Swaying Motion on the Bank of the River Falls," features the work of decorated Chilean artist Felipe Mujica — and marks his first major museum exhibition in the U.S. The work is meant to show the ecological and cultural diversity of South Florida, including the Miccosukee Tribe, which is located in the Everglades about 65 miles west of Miami.

The exhibition will showcase more than 20 new fabric panels, or curtains, that utilize the patchwork traditions of the Miccosukee Tribe.

The project is the result of a longtime collaboration between Mujica and Miccosukee artist Khadijah Cypress. Cypress created the patchwork designs for Mujica's fabric panels — traditional Miccosukee symbols and patterns of abstractions of the natural world of South Florida like animals, lightning, rain, rivers and wind.

Mujica and Cypress founded the Miccosukee Creativity Center, a community



Chilean artist Felipe Mujica

Courtesy photo

center that encourages the traditional craftwork in a space where members — both Miccosukee and Seminole — are welcome to learn patchwork, beadwork, basket making and other skills.

"We are very excited to be collaborating

with Khadijah Cypress, who was introduced to us when Mujica was in Miami for his research," PAMM associate curator Jennifer Inacio said in an email to the Seminole Tribune. "Her work in promoting the patchwork technique within her community in the Miccosukee Creativity Center is very admirable."

Inacio said visitors can expect a unique experience. As they move through the installation, the air will slowly shift the curtains and "activate" the space with each visitor who in a way will become collaborators themselves, she said. There is another interactive element in which visitors can physically move specific panels, creating an ever-changing experience.

"This group of curtains adds a new dimension to my work as well as serves as a platform for the study and promotion of Native American culture," Mujica said in a statement. "I am excited to see this combination, because even if it's done in a minimal and abstract way, the technique of Miccosukee patchwork is placed in a completely new context, in a different scale, in dialogue with architecture, space, the viewer, the elements, and also in dialogue with forms and colors while simultaneously maintaining its traditional character."

Inacio said that in addition to



Robin Hill

The Pérez Art Museum Miami hosts the exhibition starting May 20.

experiencing the works in the space and offering an experience for the audience to learn about Miccosukee culture, she also hopes it will serve as a platform to extend a dialogue about the Miccosukee Tribe.

The connection extends to the exhibition's title itself, which is meant to

directly reference the flow of water, a crucial factor in the Everglades ecosystem and ever present in Indigenous cosets.

The exhibition opens May 20 and runs through the spring of 2022. The museum is located at 1103 Biscayne Blvd. For more information, go to pamm.org.

NAMI set to reopen

STAFF REPORT

WASHINGTON — In May, the Smithsonian is scheduled to reopen the National Zoo and seven museums, including the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington D.C. NAMI is set to reopen May 21.

Visitors will need to reserve free timed-entry passes. Full re-opening information is at si.edu/visit.

Code talkers program to be held May 19

STAFF REPORT

WASHINGTON — The National Museum of the American Indian will host "Native American Code Talkers: A Lasting Legacy" at 2 p.m. on May 19.

During World War I and World War II, American Indians made a unique contribution to the U.S. Armed Forces by using their tribal languages in secret battle communications.

Join NMAI via Zoom as author and anthropologist/historian William C. Meadows of Missouri State University reveals how these Native American "code talkers" played a key role in important battles and campaigns and helped save many American and allied lives.

Following Meadows' talk, Alexandra Harris, museum's senior editor and co-author of "Why We Serve: Native Americans in the United States Armed Forces," will host a Q&A with attendees.

National Native American Hall of Fame to move to Oklahoma City

FROM PRESS RELEASE

OKLAHOMA CITY, Okla. — The First Americans Museum in Oklahoma City announced Feb. 19 that it has agreed to collaborate on the development of a permanent home for the National Native American Hall of Fame. The current Hall of Fame is located in GreatFalls, Montana.

"When FAM launches September 18, 2021, it will be a premier cultural center dedicated to increasing accurate and positive representations of First Americans and dispelling stereotypes and false narratives," said James Pepper Henry, member of the Kaw Nation and FAM director/CEO. "Expanding and building a space for the National Native American Hall of Fame in collaboration with FAM strengthens our capacity to reach

Under the agreement, both entities will remain independent but collaborate on space, fundraising and programming when appropriate.

"Joining hands with the First Americans Museum is a natural marriage of our organizations given our shared commitment to advancing the contemporary and historic achievements of Native people," James Parker Shield, chief executive officer and founder of the National Native American Hall of Fame, said.

The NNAHOF focuses on identifying and honoring Native American pathmakers and heroes from the CivilWar period up until present day. Inductees include actor Wes Studi, advocate Elouise Cobell, author VineDeloria, Jr., and Wilma Mankiller, former principal chief of the Cherokee Nation. The 2021 induction ceremonies will take place on Nov. 6 at the First Americans

SUSTAINABILITY

From page 2A

IPCA and Guardians programs generate regional investment and new tourism businesses. The Lutsël K'e Dene First Nation led the creation of Thaidene Néné Indigenous Protected Area. Last year, they spent \$500,000 on equipment — mostly from Yellowknife suppliers — that Guardians need to co-manage the area. The Nation also bought a fishing lodge near Thaidene Néné to expand ownership in a tourism sector that brought \$200 million to the region in 2017-2018.

Indigenous-led conservation also provides certainty for industry. When Indigenous Nations determine the future of their lands and secure places for conservation, they may consider development outside those areas.

The Lutsël K'e Dene negotiated impact benefit agreements with mineral companies outside Thaidene Néné. In Labrador, the



National Archives

Diné (Navajo) code talkers Corporal Henry Bahe Jr. and Private First Class George H. Kirk. Bougainville, South Pacific, December 1943.

the world — moved forward when the Innu Nation Guardians became independent, onsite monitors. And west of Yellowknife, Dehcho First Nations Guardians monitored a major Enbridge pipeline replacement. They also lead water testing initiatives, mentor youth, and co-manage an IPCA.

The way we approach development must and is changing with Indigenous ownership, entrepreneurship, and skilled job training. These activities augment community prosperity, and we need to unlock financial tools to support them. This could include, for instance, exploring effective ways to create and monetize carbon offsets that provide communities with innovative revenue options for sustaining lands.

The choice is no longer between conservation and growth. Indigenous Nations and their partners confirm that one leads to the other, and together they create shared, long-lasting prosperity.

That's why we — along with a growing movement of corporate leaders — believe Indigenous-led conservation and economic reconciliation should be reflected in the 2021

to protect 30 per cent of lands by 2030. These efforts will help us move forward together to create resilient and healthy economies at the local, regional, and national levels, while also helping to position Canada as an international leader in biodiversity and climate solutions. That is the future we choose.

Jean Paul (J.P.) Gladu is the president of Alaska to Alberta Rail and is the former president and CEO of the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business. Michael Crothers is the president and country chair for Shell Canada. J.P. is chair of, and Shell Canada is a founding member of the Boreal Champions, a group of corporate leaders committed to working collectively with Indigenous peoples to promote Indigenous-led conservation and economic reconciliation in Canada's boreal.

This op-ed appeared in the Edmonton (Alberta) Journal.