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Florida Humanities Council.

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Buffalo Tiger

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THE MAGAZINE OF THE FLORIDA HUMANITIES COUNCIL

FORUM

SPRING 2007



FLORIDA'S INDIANS

THEIR JOURNEY FROM BACKWOODS TO BIG TIME

Medicine man cuts the clouds

An eye-dazzling art

Buffalo Tiger on keeping the old ways

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COVER:

Seminole Medicine Man Bobby Henry and members of his clan pose atop the Hard Rock Cafe in New York's Times Square after the December 2006 news conference announcing the Seminole Tribe's \$965 million purchase of Hard Rock International, Inc. Photograph: REUTERS/Brendan McDermid

letter FROM THE DIRECTOR

I MET MICCOSUKEE ELDER BUFFALO TIGER for the first time in 1993, when FHC conducted its first Florida Gathering in Everglades City. As part of this cultural-tourism weekend, several of us had the privilege of traveling by airboat with Tiger to his ancestral camp in the Everglades. Dressed in a bright red patchwork vest, perched high above us on the seat of his airboat, he expertly navigated through a maze of tiny islands, stopping on the way to admire a 12-foot alligator swimming through the lily pads and a flock of roseate spoonbills foraging along the shore.

We disembarked on a small patch of land where the only sign of human inhabitation was a small chickee—an open-air cypress hut with a palmetto thatched roof—built by Tiger himself. He and his wife, Yolima, served us a traditional meal that included fried fish and sofkee (a drink made of corn).

After lunch we sat under the chickee while Tiger talked to us about Miccosukee history and culture. He told us that when he was young the water of the Everglades was so full of fish they would jump into his canoe while he was fishing. He explained that he was a member of the Bird clan, known for its ability to make peace. He expressed worry and fear that this land where he had grown up was dying, that his people were forgetting who they were and where they had come from, that they could not speak their own language.

Nearly 10 years later, historian Harry Kersey captured Tiger's words and memories in the book they coauthored, *Buffalo Tiger: A Life in the Everglades*. An excerpt of this book is printed in this issue of FORUM. Told in his own words, Buffalo Tiger's story in many ways personifies and parallels the explosive change and growth that transformed Florida from southern backwater to bellwether megastate during the past century.

Preserving their cultural heritage in the midst of explosive economic growth and dramatic environmental change is a concern of both the Miccosukees and Seminoles. Tribal leaders such as Tina Osceola, Executive Director of the Seminole Tribe's Historic Resource Department, have worked diligently to preserve tribal cultural identities and promote their history and heritage. The Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum, which she oversees, houses an amazing collection of traditional and contemporary arts and crafts, photographs, historical exhibits, and artifacts. Both tribes sponsor language lessons, classes that teach traditional crafts such as patchwork, and programs featuring traditional dancing and storytelling.

This summer, Florida teachers will have the opportunity to study Florida Indians at a weeklong FHC-sponsored seminar in Clewiston. Funded by the Ford Foundation, the seminars will bring together teachers with scholars, tradition bearers, and tribal leaders (including Tiger) to explore Miccosukee and Seminole history and culture. We know that these teachers will go back to their classrooms with new ideas, perspectives, and knowledge to share with their students about the contributions Florida Indians have made to our state's heritage, both past and present.

Janine Farver

FORUM

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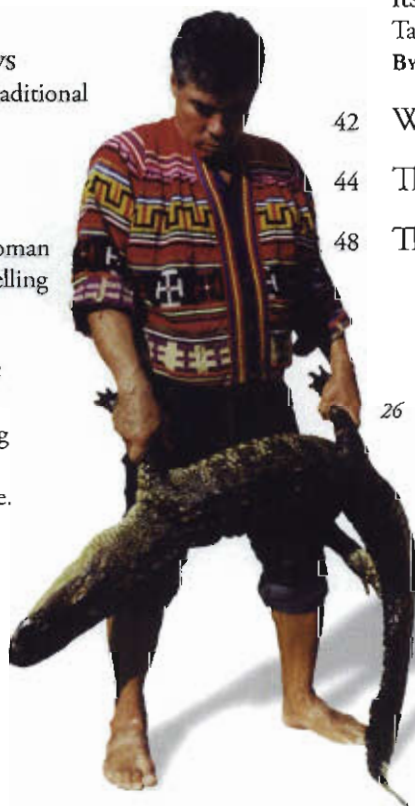


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alive!

Coming soon! FHC to launch new, improved website

Everything will be at your fingertips on FHC's completely redesigned website, coming soon to a computer screen near you. In addition to enjoying its beautiful new graphics, you will find that your online interactions are easier and quicker.

Need to register for an event or renew your membership? No problem. A few clicks and you're done. Want to apply for a grant? Just download the form you need. Interested in browsing through past FORUM features or downloading one of our radio programs? Press a button and you've got it.

You'll even be able to buy books, CDs, and magazines on our website's brand new shopping-cart area. This means that if you attend a presentation by one of our Road Scholar authors and want the book, just log on and order it. We'll get it to you. If you're interested in ordering one of our exclusive CDs of interviews, songs, and stories about Florida, just click, and we'll send it to you.

Our new, improved website is intended to save you time and trouble—but you may want to spend more time on it. We think you'll enjoy it.



See Annual Report online

You can find FHC's 2006 Annual Report on our website. Log on to www.flahum.org, and click on "About Us." This colorful, informative report summarizes our major activities of the past year.

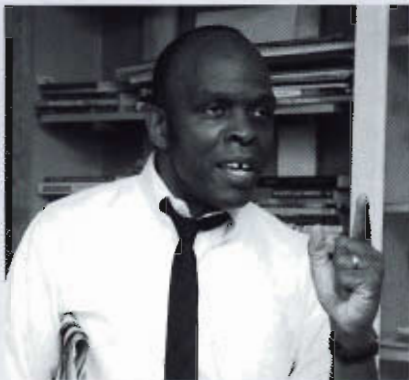
Actor/scholar to depict Cuban poet Jose Marti

Jose Marti, the 19th-century Cuban poet and statesman, is returning to Florida—in the form of Chaz Mena, a Cuban-American actor/scholar with roots in Miami. Mena, now a resident of New York who has appeared widely on stage and screen, has had a lifelong interest in Marti.

Mena's Chautauqua program will bring Marti to life in a tour of communities around the state. He made his debut as Marti recently in Tampa's Ybor City, home of the cigar workers who helped Marti shape the 19th-century Cuban Revolution. The reincarnation of Marti was developed through a FHC Mini-Grant.



Actor/scholar Chaz Mena as Marti



Actor/scholar Bob Devin Jones as Moore

New Road Scholars lineup ready to hit the highways

Our fall/spring lineup of Road Scholars soon will be hitting the highways, so be sure to schedule a stop in your community. We have assembled some of Florida's best scholars to travel around the state and present thought-provoking lectures, lead lively discussions, and bring history to life with portrayals of fascinating characters from Florida's past.

Our 2007-08 schedule of programs will focus on 20th-century Florida, including: "Florida and its Politics since 1940"; "Solving the Conundrum of Suburban Sprawl"; "Immigration's Impact on Florida and the United States"; "Origins and Legacy of the Civil Rights Movement"; "Harold Newton, the Original Highwayman"; and "Florida in the Movies."

Also, our scholar/actors will present living-history portrayals of civil rights martyr Harry T. Moore, educator and activist Dr. Mary McLeod Bethune, and Everglades champion Marjory Stoneman Douglas.

Nonprofit organizations may apply to host a Road Scholar program for a local event that is free and open to the public. Visit our newly redesigned website at www.flahum.org and click on Speakers Bureau for a full schedule of programs, details on how to apply, and costs. Additional information can be obtained by contacting Julie Henry Matus via email at jhm@flahum.org, or by calling (727) 873-2002.

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Nominations sought for FHC Board members

FHC is seeking nominations to fill five board positions. Board members will be elected in September and begin their three-year terms in January 2008. The FHC board meets three times per year; each member also serves on a board taskforce that meets once a year. The board sets policy, evaluates grant proposals, participates in fundraising activities, and promotes FHC activities.

Letters of nomination should include biographical information on the nominee, a resume, an explanation of

the special qualities the person would bring to the board, and an indication of the nominee's willingness to serve.

Nominations should be sent to Janine Farver, Executive Director, Florida Humanities Council, 599 Second Street South, St. Petersburg, FL 33701, or via email to jfarver@flahum.org. Applications for the September election will be accepted through August 31.

Teacher teams to create Harlem Renaissance projects

Florida humanities teachers, come as a team from your school this summer to a fascinating seminar for creating classroom resources about the African-American literary and cultural flowering of the 1920s and 1930s.

This residential seminar, offered by FHC's Florida Center for Teachers during the week of July 16, will delve into the historical, literary, artistic, musical, intellectual, and political developments of the African-American culture between the world wars. Although known as the Harlem Renaissance, this cultural awakening occurred across the country and involved Floridians Zora Neale Hurston, James Weldon Johnson, Augusta Savage, and others—all of whom will be brought into seminar discussions.

With input from top Florida scholars, school teams of three-to-five teachers will



Actor/scholar Phyllis McEwen as Hurston

create interdisciplinary resources and lessons for their classrooms. Teachers or schools must find local funding to underwrite the seminar fee of \$500 per teacher, which represents half of FHC's costs for seminar lodging, meals, tuition, texts, and materials. For more information, go to FHC's website, www.flahum.org, and click on Teacher Programs, or contact Ann Schoenacher at aschoenacher@flahum.org or (727) 873-2010.

Applying for FHC grants becomes easier, faster

Applying for FHC grants soon will be easier and faster because of these changes:

- The number of grant application periods has been expanded from two to three per year for both Mini-Grants (less than \$2,000) and Major Grants (\$2,000 to \$25,000). Mini-Grant applications may now be submitted January 20, July 20, and October 20. Major Grants now will be accepted March 20, August 15, and December 10.
- Florida teachers can apply for \$1,000 grants to design classroom curriculums using content from FHC's Florida Center for Teachers seminars. Another new grant category is currently in a pilot-testing stage. It includes \$25,000 awards to Florida public television stations for creating documentaries exploring issues that shaped Florida in the 20th century.
- FHC's newly redesigned website offers easier formats for submitting applications for Major Grants as well as for Mini-Grants. Now all forms can be downloaded, bringing FHC a step closer to online submissions.

For additional information about the grants program, log on to www.flahum.org and click on Grants.

In 2006, FHC awarded more than \$400,000 in federal funds to grant projects in 50 Florida communities. This federal money leveraged an additional \$500,000 in local matching funds provided by the 78 nonprofit groups that created and carried out the community-based projects.



The Tale Tellers of St. Augustine were among the recipients of FHC Mini-Grants last year. With the help of local scholars, they researched and developed stories about St. Augustine people and events during the Civil War. Participants included (back row, from left): Natalie Beltrami, Pat Griffin (scholar), and Shirley Bryce; and (front row) M.J. Harris, Sam Turner (scholar), and Drew Sappington.

Learning to survive—and thrive in the white-man's world

By HARRY A. KERSEY, JR.

FIFTY YEARS AGO, leaders of the Seminole people met under the spreading branches of a giant live oak tree on the Hollywood Reservation and adopted a tribal constitution. In doing so, they embarked on a long and difficult journey as a federally recognized sovereign entity that would function within the nation of the United States.



They were poor, eking out an existence on tourist dollars from selling crafts, wrestling alligators, and living on display in Indian villages—



Photos: Florida State Archives



Photos, from top left: a live oak tree; Addie Billie in Ochopee in 1989; Seminole children wearing patchwork in early 1900s; children playing stickball at Big Cypress Reservation in 1989; Gov. Charlie Crist with Seminoles at Tallahassee ceremony in 2007; and (on facing page) Seminole Hard Rock Hotel and Casino in Hollywood today.



and receiving federal aid. But with the same resilient spirit that had enabled them to survive on the Florida peninsula since the 1700s, they set out to build a better life for their people.

It is one of the delicious ironies of history that the Seminoles will gather this year at the Hard Rock Hotel and Casino to celebrate the 50th anniversary of that momentous vote under the oak tree. The once-destitute tribe now owns the billion-dollar global corporation, Hard Rock International, Inc. In five years Florida's Miccosukee Tribe (close relatives of the Seminoles who organized a separately recognized tribe) will celebrate in like manner at their own successful resort and casino complex in Miami.

How have the Seminoles and Miccosukees not only survived, but thrived, in the white-man's world? A review of their nearly 300 years in Florida shows that a major key to their success has been their ability to adapt to changing conditions without losing their cultural identity. Despite repeatedly being uprooted and pushed into unfamiliar and harsh surroundings,

they figured out what they had to do in order to live.

Florida's Indian people are descendants of migrants from the Creek Nation in Georgia and Alabama. After settling as farmers and hunters in the Spanish Territory of what is now North Florida, they were pushed farther and farther south by the American military. They had to learn how to live in the wild, on the run. After three wars during the first half of the 19th century and several thousand of their number dead, captured, or deported to Indian Territory in present-day Oklahoma, the remaining few hundred natives faded away into the fastness of the Everglades.

Secluded in their secure wetland enclaves, they made dramatic adaptations for survival, living on tree islands called hammocks, building open-sided structures called chickees, learning to cultivate crops on hammock soil, and devising ways to traverse the Everglades in dugout canoes.



This issue of FORUM picks up their remarkable story at the start of the 20th century, after they had begun to trade with white settlers in South

Florida, developing symbiotic economic and social relationships with them. The articles that follow trace how they further adapted as railroads brought more and more white settlers, as the United States went through the agonies of the Depression and wars, as Florida's population exploded in the last half of the 20th century, and as development marched across the state.

How did the Indians move from impoverished and virtually landless minorities with limited options in the 1930s, to federally recognized sovereign nations in the 1950s and 1960s, to the wealthy entrepreneurs they are today? Florida scholars Harry Kersey, Patsy West, and Dorothy Downs describe this economic and cultural odyssey, led by strong Seminole and Miccosukee chiefs.

An aggressive Seminole tribal chairman, Howard Tommie, took advantage of the new Indian self-determination policy announced by President Richard Nixon in 1970 and led the move to open "Smoke Shops" that sold tax-free cigarettes on the reservation despite the resistance of local authorities. In



Photo: REUTERS/Joe Skipper

1979, the tribe began unregulated high-stakes bingo games as well.

However, it was the charismatic and dynamic James Billie who took the Seminole Tribe to the next level of intense economic development. The outspoken Billie, a Vietnam veteran, musician, and showman, expanded bingo to satellite sites in Tampa,

Immokalee, and Coconut Creek, and involved the tribe in ventures abroad. Tribal income soared to hundreds of millions of dollars, and individual Seminoles prospered. Billie's longtime associate, Pete Gallagher, chronicles Billie's Icarus-like rise to the heights of power and influence in tribal affairs, as well as events surrounding his abrupt ouster—and his hopes today.

In contrast to the flamboyant Billie, a taciturn and stately Buffalo Tiger led his Miccosukee Tribe to federal recognition, separate from the Seminoles, in 1962, and presided when it became the first tribe to take complete control of its business affairs. He was no longer chairman when the Miccosukees also entered into the lucrative world of Indian gaming with their own hotel and casino complex. In an excerpt from his autobiography Tiger expresses great concern over the demise of Miccosukee values that guided his people as they struggled to survive throughout the years.

Tina Marie Osceola, executive director of the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki tribal

museum and cultural center, surveys a wide array of Seminole programs, particularly educational and social services that the tribe provides for its constituents using proceeds from gaming. The museum itself is a tribute to the priority that the tribe places on preserving its heritage, as pointed out by anthropologist Jessica Cattelino in her analysis of how the rapid acquisition of casino wealth has affected Seminole culture. As she notes, tribal members feel the new wealth has given them more control over their lives, but has created problems, too.

Yet the ability of Florida's Indians to preserve the spirit of their culture as their lifestyles change continues to be reflected in their art, poetry, and legends, in the stories of their medicine people, and in their expanding celebration of their heritage.

HARRY A. KERSEY, JR., *professor emeritus of history at Florida Atlantic University and author of many books, is one of the foremost scholars on Florida's Indians.*

Photo by Peter B. Gallagher

A Seminole girl wears a patchwork dress at a tribal festival in the mid-1990s.



Driven from their lands into a morass of poverty

BY HARRY A. KERSEY, JR.

AS LATE AS 1900, a few hundred Indians still maintained their independent existence in the wilderness of Florida's lower peninsula. They cultivated, hunted, trapped, and traded unencumbered by outside authorities. Within less than two decades, however, the conditions that had supported this cultural pattern were radically altered, and the Seminole people found themselves confronting a social and economic crisis of major proportions.

At the start of the 20th century, the Seminoles resided in widely dispersed extended-family camps, conducted subsistence farming on the rich hammocks, and roamed freely while hunting and trapping in the region between Lake Okeechobee and the Ten Thousand Islands. The tribe was divided into two linguistic groups: the camps located north of Lake Okeechobee spoke the Muskogee or Creek language, while those in the Everglades–Big Cypress region and along the lower east coast retained a Hitchiti language called Mikasuki. Although divided by language, all Seminoles shared a common cultural core encompassing social and political organization, clan membership, and religious beliefs.

The Indians engaged in a profitable reciprocal trading relationship with white merchants throughout the region. The trading houses that operated at locations on the periphery of the Everglades—the best known and most active were Frank Stranahan's at Fort Lauderdale, Bill Brickell's at Miami, George Storter's on Allen River, Smallwood's Store on Chokoloskee Island, and Brown's "Boat Landing" in the Big Cypress—absorbed a large volume of bird plumes, alligator hides, otter pelts, and other items that the Indians brought in from their hunting grounds. These valuable commodities were in great demand by the international fashion industry, so the Indian trade in Florida thrived from the 1870s through the first decade of the 20th century.



A Seminole man poles a dugout canoe through the water near Miami in about 1920. On facing page, Alice Osceola, shown with her daughter Mittie in about 1917, is thought to be the first woman photographed wearing a row of patchwork on her dress (the triangular "fire" design).

Photo: Florida State Archives

As long as the Seminoles retained unrestricted access to the wetlands of South Florida and game remained plentiful and profitable, they showed no inclination to change their traditional lifestyle. The tribe vigorously rejected all overtures by government agents and missionaries that would have led it to a more settled, reservation-bound existence.

But then their environment underwent a dramatic

transformation that adversely affected native lifestyle. The first calamity to befall the Seminoles was the rapid demise of the hunting and trapping base of their economy. After 1906 the State of Florida embarked upon a program to drain the Everglades, a key element in Gov. Napoleon Bonaparte Broward's scheme to convert the entire wetlands area south of Lake Okeechobee into a vast agricultural production center. The drainage canals that were cut from Lake Okeechobee to the Atlantic Ocean radically lowered the water table of the Everglades with disastrous effects on the region's wildlife population. It became increasingly difficult for Indian and white hunters to take alligator hides and otter pelts in profitable numbers for shipment to northern markets.

In addition, the federal Lacey Law of 1900, as well as the Florida statute of 1901, ostensibly outlawed the lucrative traffic in domestic bird plumes. Even so, it was a New York law of 1910, passed under prodding from the National Audubon Society, that ultimately denied plumes to the fashion industry of this country. With the onset of World War I and the loss of European markets, the plume and hide trade virtually collapsed. Ironically, this sudden termination of demand for Seminole products occurred at a time when they were becoming increasingly dependent upon participation in a cash economy.

A collateral pressure was being exerted on the Seminoles by the rapid growth of population in South Florida. This growth was precipitated by the frenetic expansion of railroad systems

Photo: National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution





for the millionaire developer Henry M. Flagler and his chief rival, Henry B. Plant. By 1896 the Florida East Coast Railway had extended its tracks to Miami, while the Plant System offered easy access to the lower west coast of the peninsula. Each arriving train brought more settlers to the new towns that grew up along the railroads' rights-of-way.

Soon, new farms, groves, and ranches were pushing inland from both coasts. The Indians quickly found themselves being systematically displaced from traditional campsites and hunting grounds to which they, of course, held no legal title.

The Florida land boom of the 1920s greatly accelerated this process of forced relocation. Fortunately, the government officials charged with supervision of the Seminole Indians had foreseen such an eventuality and as early as the 1890s had begun acquiring parcels of Florida land as federal reservations. These periodic accumulations, plus the parcels set aside for the Seminoles by President William H. Taft's Executive Order of June 28, 1911, amounted to more than 26,000 acres in four South Florida counties. Many of the Seminole people eventually turned to these enclaves as the Great Depression took hold.

A more subtle yet equally important change occurred in the nature of Indian-white relationships with the passing of the Florida frontier. In the egalitarian "contact communities" that grew up around the trading posts in the late 19th century, Indians and whites had interacted on the basis of relationships involving friendship, hospitality, education, and medical and legal assistance, as well as trade. Bonds of mutual trust were forged between many Seminoles and whites who appreciated the Indians' basic values of honesty and sharing and treated them with respect and dignity.

Over time this easy relationship disappeared when Seminoles no longer played a functional role in community life. Rather, they became cultural anomalies, curiously dressed strangers living beyond the pale who occasionally came into town to sell a few deerskins or huckleberries. There was no longer a strong bond of empathy—sympathy perhaps, but no true understanding and acceptance of Indians as people.

The Seminole malaise became a constant source of concern to both public and private observers familiar with the Florida situation. A few government agents and dedicated individuals worked to improve conditions for the Indians.

Lucien A. Spencer, a former Episcopal priest who became the first federal Indian agent in Florida, reported that in 1913 the Seminoles were living in 29 camps spread over a territory of 900 square miles. According to his census count, the Seminole population, including blacks living with the tribe, was 567 persons. Several years later, in 1921, Spencer reported that the northern tribe, locally known as the Cow Creeks, numbered 115, and the southern tribe of Mikasuki speakers numbered 339.

Spencer and a few others, including Florida pioneer teacher Ivy Cromartie Stranahan, worked over the years to establish schools and provide health care and job training for the Indians.

The 1920s were years of monumental reassessment and reorientation not only in education but in every aspect of American-Indian policy. It was the time when a new coalition of Progressive Era reformers, intellectuals, social scientists, women's groups, and aggressive Indian leaders coalesced in opposition to further federal intrusion into the affairs of tribal peoples. These "New Reformers" believed that the narrow assimilationist policies of the federal government were shortsighted and did not take into account the persistence of Indian cultures.

In 1931 the U.S. Senate issued a report about conditions among Florida's Seminoles. This report, written by Roy Nash, a troubleshooter for the federal Indian Office, touched on every aspect of tribal life. It was especially critical of the inadequate educational programs provided for Indians and the declining socioeconomic status of the Seminoles.

"What progress have Seminoles made in half a century?" Nash asked rhetorically in the report. "They have been driven into the most inhospitable swamps in Florida. They have been robbed of all security and possessions. They have been forced to abandon their cattle. They have been driven from groves and fields to which their only title was that of creator. With diminishing game, their economic position has become increasingly insecure. Tribal organization and authority have suffered a progressive decay. Long and rightly regarded as one of the most moral groups in the world, there is observable a definite drift toward promiscuity. Education has made no mark upon their minds. Syphilis and gonorrhoea have made their appearance. The children of warriors have become drunkards and beggars."



Photos: Florida State Archives



Shirt-tail Charley, described as "an early character of Fort Lauderdale," is shown in front of W.W. Bivens' Tin and Repair Shop on Brickell Avenue, sometime between 1910 and 1920.

Nash shared the concern of Indian agent Spencer about the many Indians who had taken up residence in commercial tourist camps at Miami and St. Petersburg, where they were engaged in the "demoralizing employment" of being placed on public display like wild beasts. Although Nash painted a dismal picture, he still felt that there was hope if proper action could be taken quickly.

Nash echoed much of the conventional Hoover-administration self-help rhetoric, extolling the virtues of gathering the Seminoles on reservation land and transforming them into self-sufficient

cattlemen and farmers. Nash was a perceptive and humane individual, typical of his day. He had accepted the assimilationist imperative espoused by the Indian Office: The American Indian could only survive by abandoning tribalism as quickly as possible.

To his credit, though, Nash realized that assimilation could only be accomplished at the expense of traditional tribal values, and he decried that reality. Like many others, he was seeking a way to lessen the immediate acculturational impact on the American Indian. He asked, "Ought we, then, attempt to make a 'white man' out of the Seminole as rapidly as possible, inasmuch as absorption is his ultimate fate?" His answer was "emphatically no. There is something infinitely precious, vastly worth cherishing in this remnant of primitive culture persisting into the 20th century surrounded by industrial civilization.

"The metamorphosis will come fast enough, do what we will. And the transition from a good Indian to a poor white man is going to be a thing painful to look upon—progress stumbling along by—paths of tribal disorganization, moral degeneration, and the disintegration of personality.

"Let us help the Seminole maintain his unique qualities and virtues; let us help him stand on his own feet with dignity in the presence of the civilization in which he is destined to blend; and let us always keep open avenues by which the transition from a primitive hunter to a unit in a society based on private property and the wage system can be accomplished gradually and with ease. But let us never, in pursuit of the desirable, lose sight of the actual."

Spencer, the Indian agent, informed the government that the Indians were living "hand to mouth" and made an impassioned plea that they be given cattle to raise. "The Indians have lost confidence because the promises made to them have been broken so often in the past 20 years...I can't urge my recom-

mendation too strongly that we be given a herd of cattle to start with. In 10 years we would become self-supporting all around...in fairness and justice to the Indians, I think that ought to be done, and I believe the Government is morally obligated to see that it is done."

It wasn't until almost a decade later that the Washington bureaucracy deigned to place a cattle herd on Seminole land.

By 1931, the Florida Seminoles had reached a crossroads where their continued existence as a viable tribal entity was in doubt. It became obvious that they were divided into at least three major socioeconomic factions. The first was the "progressive" reservation families who settled at Dania reservation (later renamed Hollywood reservation) in the late 1920s, ultimately accepting employment and schooling; they would be emulated by others who migrated to the rural reservations throughout the 1930s seeking security and employment.

The second element formed a pool of peripatetic agricultural wage-laborers who moved about South Florida, living temporarily on or near the farms and groves where they were employed. There was also a small contingent who spent at least part of each year working in the commercial camps of Miami and other tourist-oriented cities. The makeup of this growing wage-labor constituency cut across linguistic groups, clan lines, and even ceremonial busk group membership.

The third and largest group was comprised of those "traditional" families who remained in their wilderness camps throughout the Depression. Such diversity would make it difficult to achieve social or political cohesiveness among the Depression-era Seminoles.

HARRY A. KERSEY, JR., *who has worked with Florida's Indians much of his life and served as one of five non-tribal members of the Florida Governor's Council on Indian Affairs, is professor emeritus of history at Florida Atlantic University. This article is an adaptation from his book, The Florida Seminoles and the New Deal, 1933-1945.*

A Seminole man and two boys on horseback head to their camp in the cabbage tree hammocks in 1924.





An entrance to the Seminole Hard Rock Hotel and Casino in Hollywood.

From Hard Times to Hard Rock

BY PATSY WEST

THE SEMINOLE TRIBE OF FLORIDA made big headlines last December when it paid nearly a billion dollars for one of the most recognizable brands in the world, the Hard Rock Café. By acquiring Hard Rock International, Inc. from the London-based Rank Group, the tribe gained an immediate presence in 45 countries—with restaurants, hotels, and casinos from the Americas and Europe to Asia and Australia. This is believed to be the first purchase of a major international corporation by a Native American Indian tribe.

“The sun will always shine on Seminoles’ Hard Rock Cafés,” Max Osceola, tribal council representative, stated proudly at a press conference in New York City where the deal was announced. “To provide for the tribe, we’re looking beyond the border, the four square borders of our reservation. We’re looking not just in the United States, but we’re looking in the world. So this income will provide for our tribe, for our young people that are coming up.”

This expanded vision of the Seminole world has developed only within the past few decades. For most of the 20th century, Florida’s Indians eked out a hardscrabble, impoverished existence. The story of how they moved from hard times to Hard Rock illustrates their resilience and ability to adapt. Over and over, the Florida Seminoles and Miccosukees have shown their capacity for taking a foreign concept and melding it to suit their needs.

When dramatic changes wiped out the Indians’ hunting/trading livelihood as the 20th century got under way, they adapted creatively. The extremely reticent Mikasuki-speaking women, as the matriarchal heads of the family, agreed to allow their families to go “on exhibition” for the enjoyment of tourists. This novel employment benefited them with a long-lasting, lucrative occupation. The resulting tourist-based economy was positive for their culture and their sovereignty,

tangentially enhanced their art of patchwork clothing and their crafts market, and produced the tribe’s first independent business people and entrepreneurs.

During the 1930s some of the women toiled alongside African Americans and Mexican immigrants in fields for pennies a day. Some of the men worked in cattle programs created by the federal government at Brighton and Big Cypress reservations. Indian men who lived near the urban tourist-attraction camps worked as parking-lot attendants and alligator wrestlers; some Christian men on the reservations earned small incomes as preachers; medicine men were paid in the traditional exchange of red cloth and hogs for their services. Indian children walked shoeless in hot, white sand. Hookworms were prevalent in the outlying camps, weakening and sometimes killing children.

By the late 1930s only a handful of Indian families (including both Mikasuki and Creek speakers) had made the move to the federal reservations. These were located in Hollywood (near Fort Lauderdale), Big Cypress (west of the Everglades), and Brighton (the northwest corner of Lake Okeechobee, where the Creek speakers lived). The government reservations had no sanitation, running water, or electricity. Their medical and educational programs were negligible.



At top, a Seminole village on the Tamiami Trail in 1946. Above, Indians washing clothes at the Dania Seminole Reservation in 1958.

The Mikasuki speakers on the Tamiami Trail continued to live in their small tourist-attraction camps, making money from entry fees and souvenir sales. For a brief, but highly lucrative, period they also hunted frogs with a local invention—homemade airboats that were pushed by airplane propellers. When the market for frogs at local restaurants waned, the Indians began to use their airboats for the tourist trade.

World War II brought new job vacancies left by men, white and black, who went to war. Indian men filled these jobs, driving trucks, serving as mechanics, operating heavy machinery, working in lumber mills, and building airfields. Picking crops became more lucrative than before the war, as it was vital to the nation to get Florida's wintertime crops to market.

During the 1940s, the commercial market picked up for the construction of Indian "chickee" shelters for poolside and restaurant use. Indian men were hired to build these shelters, made of cypress posts and thatched roofs of Sabal palm fronds. During the Easter season, Indian women cut and bundled bud sprays of Sabal palm fronds for the Palm Sunday market. Some Indian men painstakingly boiled garfish, retrieving the fish scales to sell to the sequin industry.

Seminole leader Betty Mae Jumper displays her baskets and dolls at the Florida Folk Festival in White Springs in 1983.



Photos: Florida State Archives



Postcard of a young Seminole man wrestling an alligator at the Musa Isle Indian Village in Miami.

In the 1950s, the federal government moved to end monetary outlays to certain tribes assumed capable of being mainstreamed. This was part of an effort to ease some of the nation's deficit following World War II. For Florida's native population, it was a wakeup call; they were put on the list for "termination" of federal aid. This emergency situation jump-started their efforts to organize and govern themselves.

Fortunately for them, the first formally educated "Seminoles" (as all of Florida Indians were still called in those days) had just arrived back at the reservations from the Cherokee Indian School in North Carolina or the Haskell Institute in Kansas. Unlike Indians from tribes where boarding-school education was mandatory, Florida Indians had *asked* to be educated. The literate and bilingual members of the tribe provided leadership that was a great advantage as the Indians negotiated with the federal government regarding "termination." In addition, several groups and individuals spoke out on their behalf: community organizations; friends who had always supported the Indians; and one of the world's leading scholars on the indigenous people of the New World—William C. Sturtevant, a research anthropologist and curator at the Smithsonian Institution.

As a result of the negotiations, the Florida Indians were not terminated as a tribe. Instead, they were allowed to organize as a federally recognized tribe. They requested and were granted 25 years in which to pay back loans and achieve self-determination.

But during the termination negotiations, the Mikasuki speakers who lived along the Tamiami Trail argued that they should be recognized as a separate tribal entity. Their tribalism was based on decades of their isolationist, antigovernment platform and their credo to retain cultural traditions. These ideals were strengthened by their decades of economic independence made possible by their tourism-based economy.

The government balked at recognizing them as a separate tribe. To force the issue, the Mikasuki speakers made the political move of sending representatives to Cuba to request tribal recognition from Fidel Castro's communist government. Castro—fully aware of the politics—granted this request. When the Indian emissaries returned home to Florida, the embarrassed U.S. government recognized Mikasuki speakers as a separate tribe—and requested that they stay away from Cuba's communists. (See article on page 17.)

While the Seminole Tribe of Florida was officially recognized in 1957, the separate Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida was recognized in 1962. The federal government built the Seminoles a tourist-attraction village in Hollywood, while the Miccosukees received a restaurant, gas station, and a school



Photo by Peter B. Gallagher

Seminole dolls made of palmetto husks.

for their “Model Indian Community” on the Tamiami Trail.

For its initial economic venture, the Seminole Tribe leased some of its land; but this didn’t generate enough money to filter down to the tribal members. The leadership scrimped money to send representatives to Washington for meetings regarding government grants and loans, ate bologna sandwiches at meetings (and felt glad to have them), and hosted the first tribal rodeo to pay back a loan from a local organization that had financed their initiatives. An official of the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) quipped to news reporters in the early 1970s, “The Seminoles have no head for business. Not one of their money-making enterprises makes a nickel.” At about the same time, the Miccosukees became the first tribe to replace all of their BIA officials with tribal members.

Meanwhile, the sale of arts and crafts continued to be a strong supplement to meager salaries for virtually all of the female tribal members employed on the Seminole Reservations and for a number of the men. On the Hollywood Reservation, for instance, tribal employee Charlie Billy Boy received \$50 per week for driving the school bus—and brought in the same amount from his weekly sales of handmade cypress tomahawks. And a tribal department head, Vietnam veteran James E. Billie, traveled around the country with his alligator-wrestling show, entertaining audiences with his Have-Alligator-Will-Travel schtick.

In the mid-1970s the Seminole Tribe formulated legal offensives to recover fees owed them by the state. They also located grants to aid their incentives. The tribe was then suffering a 30-percent unemployment rate. A BIA director of social services noted, “Out of 1,200 Seminoles, somewhat

more than 1,000 are receiving some kind of aid, whether it’s food stamps, unemployment, or whatever.”

The first economic breakthrough for the tribe came from the sale of tax-free tobacco. Under Chief Howard Tommie, the Seminoles set up their first “Smoke Shop” on their sovereign, tax-free, Hollywood Reservation. This netted \$140,000 per month for the tribe. But with related expenditures, including paying a financial backer and legislative lobbyists, smoke-shop pioneer Marcellus Osceola recalled, “That first carton cost \$600,000.”

From then on, however, trailer-based shops with drive-throughs sprang up along the highway and did a fantastic business with smokers willing to make the drive out to the “rez” for the lower (tax-free) prices. The State of Florida was furious over the loss of tax revenues and fought the Seminoles to end the enterprise. The Seminoles cut their teeth in the political arena by fighting the state over the tax-free status of the reservations. The Seminoles won by evoking their tribal sovereignty.

Then there was gaming. It is a little-known fact that the Seminole Tribe was offered the opportunity to establish games of chance in the 1960s but turned it down because of religious convictions of the conservative Baptist element in the tribe. But in the late 1970s, the tribe began looking into high-stakes bingo games.

In 1979, alligator-wrestlin’ James E. Billie became tribal chairman, a post he would hold for 22 years (and one that he often compared to his sideline profession). The first high-stakes bingo operation in the country opened in December 1979 on the Hollywood Reservation—in a \$900,000 bingo

hall. The tribe's newest endeavor was again challenged by the State of Florida, which took the case to the U.S. Supreme Court—and lost. Bingo would become synonymous with the Florida Seminoles. Other tribes around the country eagerly hired the Seminoles to learn how to cash in.

But the Seminole tribal members were not getting rich. Their gaming operation had partners who held about 40 percent of the bingo business and a significant portion of the smoke-shop enterprise. As Chairman Billie commented, "There are times when you've got to take what you can find. You've got to get someone to take that risk, especially when you don't have the collateral." So, while 1980 saw \$4.8 million in tribal revenues, there were also big expenses. The 1,500 anxious Seminoles had to wait until 1981 when \$1 million was distributed in a revenue-sharing plan that netted tribal members a dividend of \$600 per man, woman, and child. For a family of four, this brought an income of \$2,400 that year.

Then, through an interesting coincidence, the tribe was able to expand its reservation holdings. This came about after the City of Tampa uncovered the graves of 19th-century Seminoles during downtown construction, which was at the site of Fort Brooke, the Seminole War outpost of some 100 years previously.


Through creative negotiations, Chairman Billie agreed to re-inter the remains elsewhere—as long as Tampa contributed

the land that the Seminoles could use as the final resting place. Tampa gave the Seminoles an 8.5-acre parcel of land east of the city, near Interstate-4. After burying the remains on that land, the Seminoles then deeded the land to the federal government to be held in trust, thus creating their newest sovereign, tax-free federal reservation. Then they built tribal housing and a museum—and a Smoke Shop and bingo hall, which opened in 1982 to a capacity crowd of 1,300.

That same year, the Miccosukees, under Chairman Buffalo Tiger, negotiated with the state to have the unoccupied state Miccosukee Reservation lands in the Big Cypress transferred in trust to the federal government. This move enabled the tribe to have a reservation of its own. The tribe then contracted with three Texas-based companies that purchased oil rights on that land. The Miccosukees, a new tribe with no public identity, also began to market their image by way of Buffalo Tiger's music-playing sons and their public-relations connections. (See article on page 34.) The tribe established Miccosukee House on the Miami River for an "in town" presence, soon to be called the "Miccosukee Embassy."

The Seminoles' revenues from smoke shops and bingo funded capital improvements, tribal programs, and the development of an entrepreneurial class. In 1986 the Seminoles opened the Sheraton Tampa East Hotel on 31 acres adjacent to their Tampa Reservation. The tribal budget that

Photo: REUTERS/Cetin Braley



Miccosukee Tribal Chairman Billy Cypress stands just inside the entrance of the casino located in the tribe's \$50 million resort and convention center at the edge of the Everglades.

year was \$12 million. The Seminoles creatively paid for the project with a bank loan guaranteed 90 percent by the BIA, an almost \$2 million Urban Development Action Grant, and \$2.5 million of their own funds. "The Seminoles of Florida are definitely leading the way," stated Ross Swimmer, assistant secretary of the U.S. Department of the Interior, in his speech at the hotel opening.

In 1990 the Miccosukee Indian Bingo Center, seating 2,000 players, opened on a parcel of 25 acres located east of the tribal headquarters at the intersection of the Tamiami Trail and Krome Avenue. The parcel was made a Federal Trust property under the Gaming Regulatory Act of 1988, and the Miccosukee economy began to improve.

In 1991, the Seminoles built an impressive four-story tribal headquarters building in Hollywood. By 1994, the tribal revenue was \$50 million from high-stakes bingo, penny-ante poker, and electronic slot machines. The tribe's Coconut Creek Casino opened in north Broward County, and by 1996 the Seminole gaming income was up to \$80 million, although the state was fighting against the tribe's right to have slot machines.

The Seminoles, concerned that the court ruling allowing tribal gaming could be overturned, began diversifying their investments. Some of their other enterprises included Billie Swamp Safari, a game preserve for exotic animals; a nursery for raising landscaping plants; farms of citrus, sugarcane, and vegetables; a grapefruit orchard for the Japanese market; and a turtle farm targeting Asian markets.

In 1993 the Miccosukees divested themselves of their bingo partners over a variety of charges that were supported by the BIA and upheld in 1994 in U.S. District Court. As a result of this takeover, the Miccosukees saw a \$7 million profit in 1994.

In 1997 the Seminole Tribe distributed monthly dividends of \$1,000 to each man, woman, and child in the tribe (an annual income of \$48,000 for a family of four). Chairman Billie initiated the construction of the \$10 million Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum, which celebrates Seminole history and culture. The museum opened on the Big Cypress Reservation in 1997 and serves as the tribe's most visible use of gaming revenues to preserve and promote Seminole

traditions and to celebrate sovereignty.

As part of their economic diversification, the Seminoles expanded their calf production and became well known worldwide for its quality. They established an additional cattle operation outside the United States, in Nicaragua. And, in a move toward further diversification, they built an aircraft company in Fort Pierce.

In 1998 the Miccosukees became involved in the business of sports—by hosting championship boxing. Both tribes purchased expensive suites at Pro Player Stadium and had prominent advertisements for gaming at major sports venues. The Miccosukees also built a 302-room hotel at their gaming facility on the Tamiami Trail and thus completed their \$46 million, 5-star entertainment destination, the Miccosukee Resort, in 1999.



A postcard, postmarked 1932, shows Indians in front of chickees in Fort Lauderdale. Identified at right is "Shirt-tail Charley."



Seminole women and children shown picking tomatoes for the Gaunt Co. in Ochopee. (Date unknown)

Photo: Florida State Archives

pickin tomatoes for Gaunt Co, Ochopee, Fla



Photo by Peter B. Gallagher

Celebrity mogul Donald Trump (center) watches Seminole alligator wrestling during a business trip to the Brighton Reservation in 1997. Others, from left, include: Mitchell Cypress, then president of the tribe; attorney Jerry Strauss; Trump associate Ken Field; Seminole Tribal counsel Jim Shore; Agnes Motlow, Shore's assistant; and Jack Smith, Jr., tribal councilman.

By 2001 the Seminole Tribe was garnering \$300 million in profits annually. Monthly dividends for each tribal member were steady at \$2,000 (\$96,000 annually for a family of four); but the people wanted it increased to \$3,000 by the end of the year. Other tribal ventures were in the works: the Tampa Hard Rock Hotel and Casino (which would open in March 2004) and the Hollywood Reservation's \$400-million Hard Rock Hotel and Casino, retail shopping center, and concert venues (which would open in May 2004).

But a major political upheaval took place within the tribe in 2001, and James Billie was ousted from the chairmanship he'd held for 22 years. In addition, the National Indian Gaming Commission began scrutinizing the personal expenditures of some members of the Seminole Council and Board who were suspected of misusing their discretionary accounts.

The result was a more professional business structure in all departments. The Seminole Tribe presently employs more than 2,000 non-Indians and purchases more than \$24 million in goods and services from more than 850 Florida vendors a year. In addition, the tribe pays \$3.5 million in federal payroll taxes.

It is planning yet another venture, too—an expansion of the Coconut Creek Casino to include a 24-story, 1,500-room hotel. This would be substantially larger than any other hotel in Broward County. Meanwhile, the Miccosukees have expanded their destination venue to include the purchase of a resort and golf club in Kendall.

The Seminole Tribe no longer officially releases the amount of its dividend distribution to its members, saying this is now considered a privacy issue. "Generous" is what tribal members are told to reply when asked. Yet, according to a recent "leaked" figure quoted in a February 2007 news article, the dividends were up to \$7,000 per month, or \$336,000 annually for a family of four.

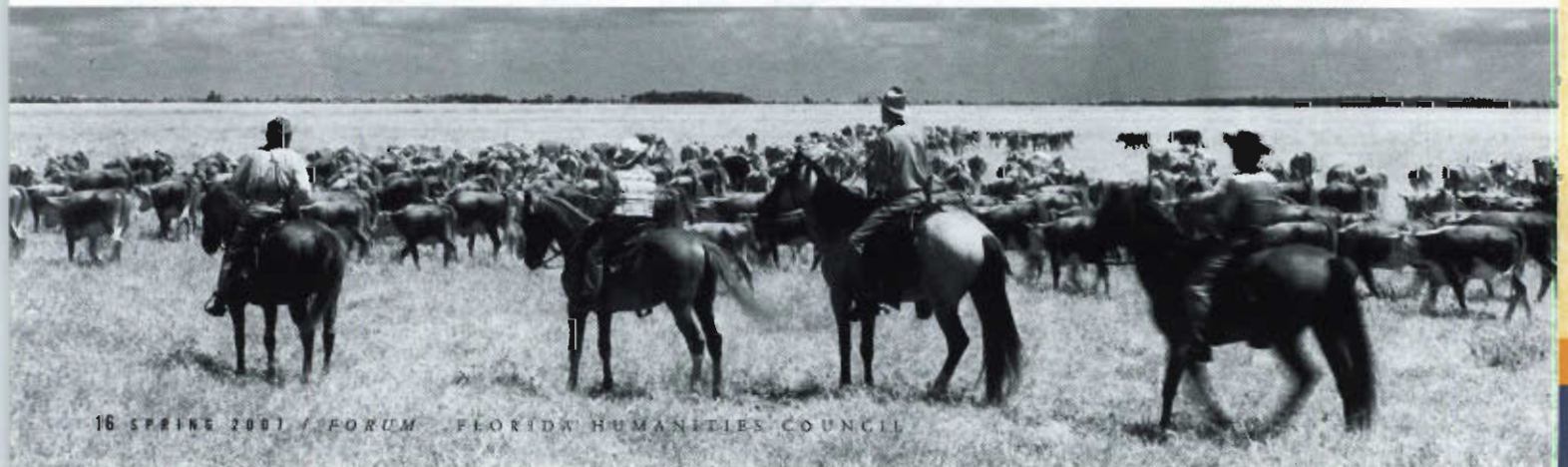
The Miccosukees have never revealed their tribal dividend, although it is said to be larger than that of the Seminoles. In keeping with its tradition of shared community wealth, the Miccosukee Tribe distributes a larger percentage of its annual profits—and it has fewer tribal members. The Seminole Tribe is more corporately conservative in dealing with its income and investments, although dividends have played a major political role within the tribe.

As they embark on their \$965 million global venture with Hard Rock International, the Seminoles are already discussing plans to add 15 more hotels and even some condominium-hotels around the country and the world. In doing so, they are adapting to a changing marketplace in order to provide for the tribe, just as they have throughout their history. This time, however, instead of just surviving economically, they are thriving.

PATSY WEST, an ethnohistorian, is author of *The Enduring Seminoles: From Alligator Wrestling to Eco Tourism*; Betty Mae Tiger Jumper: *A Seminole Legend*; and *The Seminole and Miccosukee Tribes*.

Seminole cowboys herd cattle on the Brighton Reservation pasture in 1950.

Photo: Florida State Archives



A STRATEGIC TRIP TO HAVANA

IN JULY 1959, after the U.S. government rebuffed their request for recognition as a tribe separate from the Seminoles, 11 representatives of Florida's Mikasuki-speaking Indians traveled to Havana to ask Fidel Castro's government to officially recognize their tribe. The timing was guaranteed to force the issue by capturing the attention of Washington, where anticommunist sentiment was at a fever pitch. Only six months previously Castro and his revolutionaries had overthrown the Batista regime.

BUFFALO TIGER, who was the spokesman for the Indian delegation to Cuba, describes their meeting with Castro in the book, *Buffalo Tiger: A Life in the Everglades*. He includes some colorful details: "We didn't see him much, except one time he made a little speech. About two or three Castros were there. It was hard to tell which one was the real Castro. It looked like they had doubles for him; it was pretty hard to tell which one was the real one. He was big and said hello to us and that kind of thing."

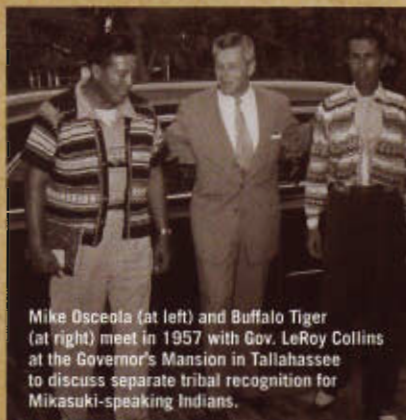
Through an interpreter, Castro told the delegation, "We are your friends, and we're going to help you all we can," Tiger recalls. Castro, aware of the impact this would have in the United States, was only too happy to grant the tribe official Cuban recognition. He went on to invite them to live in Cuba if they had a hard time back in their home country.

At the time of the visit, the nascent revolutionary government was celebrating; and Castro gave several of his famously long speeches. Tiger recalls attending one of these speeches, which lasted an entire afternoon: "We were sitting outside [high in the stands of a stadium]. I thought it was very hot,



Representatives of Florida's Mikasuki-speaking Indians are shown in Havana in 1959. They met with Fidel Castro to request that the Cuban government recognize them as a tribe separate from the Seminole Tribe. Buffalo Tiger, spokesman for the delegation, is in back row, fifth from left. His father, Tiger Tiger, is fourth from left. They are flanked by Cuban soldiers.

Photo courtesy Historical Museum of Southern Florida



Mike Osceola (at left) and Buffalo Tiger (at right) meet in 1957 with Gov. LeRoy Collins at the Governor's Mansion in Tallahassee to discuss separate tribal recognition for Mikasuki-speaking Indians.

Photo: Florida State Archives

and you got thirsty! Hot sun, hot day, I had to bear with it! Anyhow, everything went okay. We came down and went back to the hotel and rested. Well, I don't see how he could talk that long!"

After the delegation returned home to Florida, the *Miami Herald* ran a front-page story about the visit. "It didn't take long before I had phone calls," Tiger recalls. State officials called and promised them a separate reservation—and emphasized that they shouldn't go back to Cuba.

Then federal officials called, also promising the reservation. "They asked me to promise not to go back and not to talk to those people again, and they were going to come down and work with us," Tiger recalls. "I told them yes, we'd be happy to talk to them..."

After some delay, in 1962 the federal government went on to recognize the Miccosukees as an official tribe, separate from the Seminole Tribe, which had received recognition in 1957.

Buffalo Tiger and Harry Kersey, Jr. co-authored the book, Buffalo Tiger: A Life in the Everglades.

PATCHWORK: AN EYE-DAZZLING ART

BY DOROTHY DOWNS

AROUND 1917 AN INDIAN WOMAN living in a camp in the South Florida wilderness sat at a hand-cranked sewing machine and stitched together different pieces of brightly colored cotton cloth. She created an intricate pattern of shapes and colors—a patchwork design—that other women admired and duplicated. Over time they created many variations of patchwork in eye-dazzling colors and distinctive patterns. And in the process, they developed an art that would become the most widely recognized mark of identity for Florida Seminole and Miccosukee Indian people.

“I think our patchwork sets us apart from other tribes,” says Virginia Poole, a member of the Miccosukee Tribe. “I don’t believe any other tribe in the United States has the patchwork like the Seminoles and Miccosukees... To me, it identifies us. I am Indian. I am proud to be an Indian. It’s my heritage.”

Sewing patchwork is time consuming. It was only after hand-cranked sewing machines were introduced to Florida’s Indians in the late 1800s that they created complex designs. The first known patchwork design created around 1917 was possibly made by Alice Osceola, wife of William McKinley Osceola.

Dated photos and collections of patchwork clothing are guides to stylistic changes over the decades. Photos taken at the first Indian tourist villages—at Coppinger’s Tropical Gardens, Alligator Farm, and Seminole Indian Village on the banks of the Miami River and at the rival Musa Isle—show Indian families dressed in their unique clothing styles. The women wore long skirts and capes, while the men dressed in “big shirts,” one-piece shirts that had waistbands and skirts that reached below knee-

length. The clothing was made of many bands of colorful cotton cloth sewn together, some decorated with a row of appliqué or with patchwork made by sewing together pieces of brightly colored cotton cloth in long rows of designs.



Three children wear patchwork at Seminole festival in mid-1990s.

Photo by Peter B. Gallagher

The women gave “looks-like” names to the patchwork designs to identify them easily. They shared their design ideas with each other. Photos at Musa Isle around 1920 show only one or two rows of the early patchwork “fire” designs and another called “rain.” “Lightning” and “storm” are other early designs with names inspired by weather. There are versions of “arrow” and “cross” designs that come from ancient Southeastern Indian designs.

Women often took design ideas from things they saw around the camp, like letters of the alphabet copied from boxes or bags. Animal designs were inspired by nature stories and myths, like the legends of crawdad and turtle. Large and small diamond designs are named “alligator” or “diamondback rattlesnake.” A “man-on-horseback” design became popular as the people became more involved in raising cattle.



A patchwork design made in the 1970s.

Photo by Dorothy Downs

The 1930s and 1940s were high points of Seminole and Miccosukee clothing styles. Women’s skirts and men’s big shirts or jackets had as many as five rows of tiny patchwork designs in two or more bright colors. In the 1960s, the women made lots of patchwork clothing to sell to earn much needed money. They created new designs made of small rectangular and square pieces forming double-diamonds that met in the center of an “X.” Since the 1970s, some women learned how to make complex, wide designs by watching quilting shows on television. Animals for which clans are named—like Bird, Panther, Deer, Bear, and Otter—inspired new designs created in the 1990s. (See accompanying photos showing all of these styles.)



FIRE

RAIN

LIGHTNING

TREE OR TELEPHONE POLE

BIRD FLYING

CRAWDAD

TURTLE

MAN-ON-HORSEBACK

CROSSED LOGS OF THE SACRED FIRE

ARROW

ARROW

BROKEN ARROW

SNAKE OR ALLIGATOR

BONES

Women today sew their finest clothing for their families to wear at special events like the annual Green Corn Dance or the Clothing Competition at the Seminole Tribal Fair. Men, women, and children of all ages still compete for prize money in contests wearing clothing in different styles. At the annual Miccosukee Art Festival, tribe members model their best outfits in a fashion show.

While patchwork played a considerable role in Seminole and Miccosukee economies during the 20th century, it is valued more today for its cultural importance. The women no longer need to sew and sell patchwork for a living, because tribal members have become wealthy through casino and other business ventures. Except for young women in very traditional families, few are learning how to sew. Instead, they are pursuing educational opportunities and are encouraged to participate in internship programs to learn to work in tribal businesses.

This has left some tribal members worried about the future of patchwork. As their lifestyles change rapidly, they don't want to lose their native languages or their patchwork, solid links to their past. At the same time, they enjoy the many improvements in their economic, health, and educational systems—results of decisions made by progressive tribal leaders.

There are still women who are true artists and continue to love making patchwork clothing; but they are concerned that this part of their heritage is being adversely affected by current trends. They are all too aware that much of the patchwork currently being produced is sewn by people who are not Indians. This patchwork is made to sell as "Seminole patchwork" to both Seminole and non-Seminole people. Such patchwork, which is produced relatively cheaply, is resold at higher prices. This presents both legal and ethical problems for the native art world in general. Officials of the Seminole Tribe are aware of this and plan to attack it from both perspectives in the upcoming year.

Patchwork made by non-Indians is sometimes being worn in tribal clothing competitions without being detected, although that is against the competition

At left side of page, a patchwork sampler created by Effie Osceola and labeled with the "looks like" names for designs.

Photo by Dorothy Downs



Photo: Historical Museum of Southern Florida



Photo by Dorothy Downs

At top, a woman models the Seminole patchwork and hair styles of the 1940s. Above, Effie Osceola works on her patchwork.

rules. Instead of sewing their own patchwork clothing, some contestants buy outfits made by others so they can receive honorariums for participating in the fashion shows and clothing competitions at tribal art fairs.

But despite these relatively recent economic and cultural changes, patchwork is still one of the most visible marks of Florida Indian heritage. Modern Indian casinos display patchwork designs and clothing, paintings, baskets, and other artifacts throughout their public areas. And, just as the tribes sold patchwork through much of the 20th century, they continue to sell it—in the casino gift shops and reservation stores.

DOROTHY DOWNS, a native Miamian, is curatorial consultant to the Native North American Art collection at the Lowe Art Museum, University of Miami. She is the author of *Art of the Florida Seminole and Miccosukee Indians and Patchwork: Seminole and Miccosukee Art and Activities*.

Keeping the old ways

In 1962, Buffalo Tiger was elected first chief of Florida's Miccosukee Tribe, a post he held for more than two decades. Now 87, he reflects on the dramatic changes his people have experienced over the past century, he worries: Will their old ways and traditional beliefs survive?

Following are some of his thoughts on the subject—in his own words—as excerpted from the book he coauthored in 2002 with historian Harry A. Kersey, Jr.: Buffalo Tiger: A Life in the Everglades.

RESPECTING THIS LAND

Traditional Miccosukee people [called *Eelaponke*] always had great respect for this land, this earth, and life itself. They believed the Breathmaker [*Feshabkee-ommehche*] created the land and all living things. Miccosukee people cherished the earth they live on. They honored it because they knew without it they would not be alive. Without this earth and its elements—air, water, land—nothing would be here. They recognized the beauty of this earth, that from it would grow food for them to survive. They called it *yaknee*—“this land.” They appreciated deeply how the land provided delicious crops like corn, pumpkins, bananas, potatoes, beans, tomatoes, and sugarcane. They appreciated how the water provided drink and many species of fish. The land did not only provide plants; it provided birds and other wildlife... Our ancestors taught us to remember we are part of this earth and we must protect it. We must not destroy or sell it.

We had no boundaries on this land, no fences. We were always free. All wildlife and human life could freely wander. Since Breathmaker put this land for us to live on and care for, money cannot buy the land. We are not supposed to buy or sell even a cup of muck. Many of our people have fought and died for us to keep our land.

Today many Miccosukee people are not following their cultural beliefs about the land. They are not practicing tradition in their day-to-day life. The young people are not taught what earth means to their lives. They need to learn and relate to the meaning and develop strong feelings like their grandfathers and their grandfathers before them. Land is more important than money. Today it seems like Indian people think other things are more important.

BREATHMAKER'S PEOPLE

White-skinned people came from one island, red-skinned people came from another island, but we don't talk too much about white-skinned people because we only know ourselves what we learn from this earth. Breathmaker talked to us after we were created. He told us, “I will return one day. Carry on what I have taught you to live by or otherwise I will destroy you.”

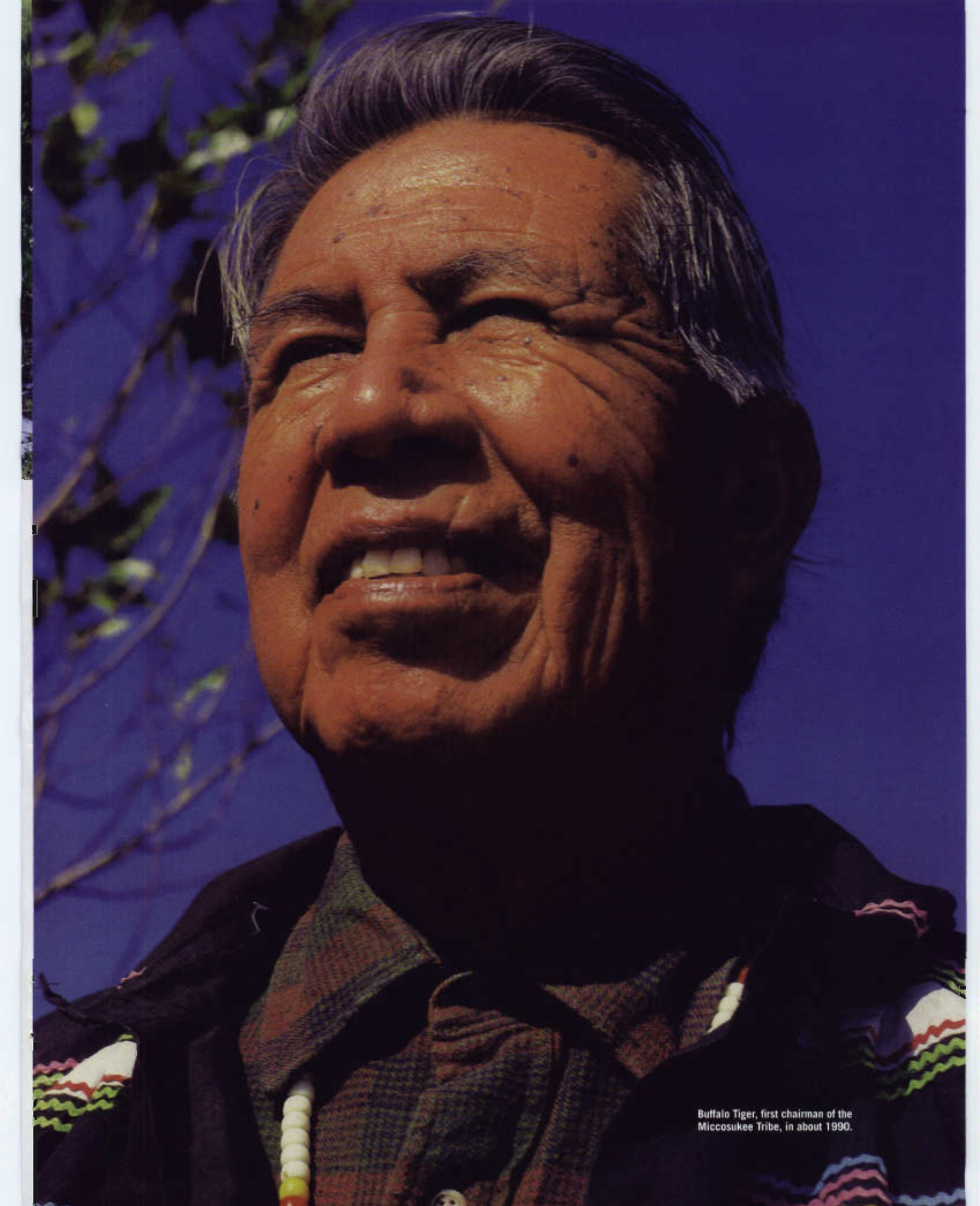
We were told before Breathmaker returns we will see signs like people changing to be disrespectful and people doing many wrong things. You will probably see more hurricanes, tornadoes, and earthquakes. You will probably see something you've never seen before on this earth because earth is getting hotter. You've never seen certain types of snakes around here before; they will probably be here. So many things will change, you see. We must keep that and believe that. So that's what our people know and always believe—something's going to happen someday soon, and they want to make sure we won't be something different.

We are Breathmaker's people so we have to love nature and try to hang on to nature. Don't let nature die—that's what we are here for. Yes, it is something that must be understood and passed on.

KNOWING OURSELVES

We were taught by our grandfathers, fathers, mothers, and uncles that we should not get angry when we know something is not true. We should be able to be at peace with ourselves and to make matters better for ourselves. We Miccosukees should always know ourselves. We should place our feet solidly on the ground and not let anyone say that we are worthless beings. If you as a Miccosukee are able to identify with your ancestry, you will know yourself. If you know your identity and practice it, no one will ever be able to condemn you as worthless.

Another tradition taught to Miccosukees was that they should never think that they could defeat the people living around them. The people living around them were the white people. The white population outnumbered them, and they reasoned that they would have to learn to live together as neighbors. They did not have to be enemies. They simply needed to know themselves, their past and present history, and the events that led them to a moderate adaptation of non-Indian lifestyles.



Buffalo Tiger, first chairman of the
Miccossukee Tribe, in about 1990.

REMEMBERING OUR LAWS

White men can make a law today, and it can change tomorrow. Our laws are not supposed to be that way. We are supposed to stick with whatever laws we were given.

Never hate anybody, and never talk about anybody. Everybody has something good in them. We should understand and care for each other. Sometimes if you get to know a person, he or she could be a nice person. You should not just hurt or disrespect someone. We should help and care for each other because there are not too many Miccosukee people.

CULTURE TALK

You must ask questions of your uncle, your grandmother, or grandfather. Sometimes your older brother even knows more culture talk, and you can ask to learn. Your mother knows culture talk, and you can ask her questions about it. If we do not ask questions about things, we stop learning and we are going to lose out. Miccosukee ways—culture, language, and all that—can be gone overnight. We do not want that to happen. We want people to speak our language. We want to keep the culture and traditional feeling of understanding. Those must keep going as long as we live. That is what we are here for, so we should be thinking about the culture. We must always remember what Breathmaker has given to us. We must keep it that way.

THE EVERGLADES WATER

As for Everglades' water, everything has changed. The water was very clean years ago. Miccosukees would swim in the Glades water and drink it. Today people are saying that the water is not clean. You can tell that is true because it is yellow-looking and does not look like water you would want to drink. You would probably get sick from drinking it. That means that fish or alligators in the water are not healthy; white men did that, not Indians. Miccosukees were told that was what was going to happen many years ago, and now it has. We cannot just say that the water is no good or the land is no good and turn our back on that.

NEVER FORGETTING

We have to realize more people are coming from other countries. Population is increasing in Dade County and Florida. It's heavy, and I don't know how long we are going to keep fighting and keep our land the way it is now.

One day we might find we don't have much of anything left. And maybe we all will speak English and forget about our language and traditional practice. But to have something and understand it well, you never lose that. That means you respect yourself and you have not forgotten yourself and keep learning. Even though you go to school and learn English, and do things so you can make a buck to buy food. And we have to act like somebody else we call the white man—but knowing all the time we are brown people, or Eelaponke. But we can still work so many hours, so many days to make a little money to buy different things we need.

So that makes it hard for us. Once we start thinking about money, we forget about ourselves. Because all of us seem to want more money; if we can make more money doing this and doing that, you are going to go after that. And I don't blame you for feeling that. But if you train, you learn so strong and so well in your customs, your traditional practice and language, you will never forget.

WE CAN BE LOST

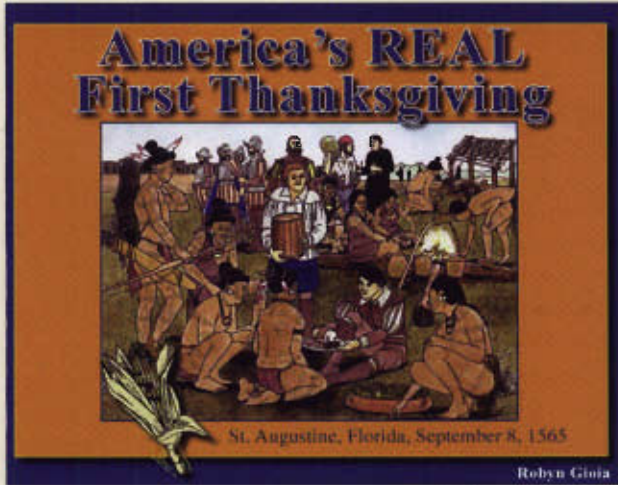
In years back, elders were always telling us what type of things we used to do. If we are not doing what we are supposed to do, we will lose it. We will lose it, and we will be sorry later. We have lost the Snake Dance, as people used to call it. Not too long ago we went to Snake Dance. Now we don't even have them. I don't know how it happened, but it slipped through our hands. I don't believe we could get that back because most of us don't know how that works. These are the kind of things I am talking about. We can lose the Green Corn Dance easily. We can lose our language easily.

We can be lost ourselves. I'm sure I know that most of the Miccosukee people don't want that to happen. You don't want to be lost with other people, too many other people.

BUFFALO TIGER, the first chairman of the Miccosukee Tribe and one of the most prominent modern Indian leaders in the southeastern United States, lives in Miami.

HARRY A. KERSEY, JR., professor of history emeritus at Florida Atlantic University, is the author of several books about Florida's Indians.

Discover Florida's Native American Past

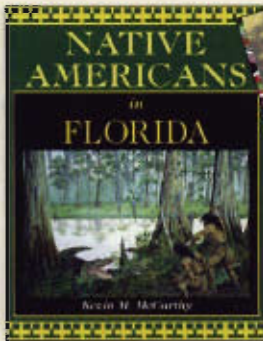


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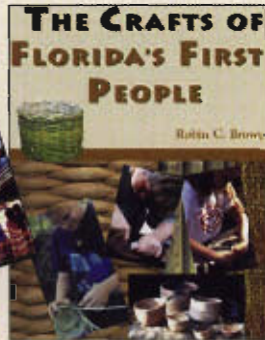
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WOMAN OF LEGEND

"AT TIMES MY MEMORY GOES BACK to the days when I used to see old people sit around a campfire," Betty Mae Jumper recalled a few years ago. "After the evening meal is over, children gather around for older people to tell them stories. This was the way that young people were taught the rules of life and their clan's ways. I am glad to say that this helped me to live and learn and to abide by the outside world's rules and laws as well."

Those old days and old ways live in the memories of this legendary Seminole woman, now 84. They are recounted in her books, including *A Seminole Legend: The Life of Betty Mae Tiger Jumper*, which she wrote with co-author Patsy West; and *Legends of the Seminoles*, which she wrote with Peter B. Gallagher.

Betty Mae Jumper helped lead the tribe's transition from the grinding poverty of its isolated rural existence during the first half of the 20th century to its current prosperity. Born in 1923, she was almost killed by a few Seminole men

who called her a "half-breed" because her father was white. They claimed she would bring bad luck to the tribe. Her great-uncle, a powerful medicine man, grabbed his rifle and drove them off. The little girl grew up to become the first female ever elected Chairman of a federally recognized American Indian tribe. She also was the first member of her tribe to master reading, the first to receive a high school diploma, and the first to earn a nursing degree. As a young woman, she used her education to bring modern medical treatment to her people, when many of them still didn't trust white-man's medicine.

In the 1950s she helped organize the Seminole Tribe's governmental structure and was elected to the first Tribal Council. As one of the few Seminoles fluent in all of the tribe's languages—Creek, Miccosukee, and English—she served as the chief interpreter for her people during the governmental organization. In 1967 the tribe elected her to be its chair, or "chief"—its top leadership position, which she held for a four-year-term. She also founded, and for many years edited, the tribe's newspaper.



Betty Mae Jumper is shown with her grandson Jorge.

Photo by Peter B. Gallagher

EXCERPTS FROM
LEGENDS OF THE SEMINOLES

by Betty Mae Jumper and Peter B. Gallagher, Illustrated by Guy LaBree

Throughout her life, she has also been a tribal storyteller, recounting the traditional Seminole legends that she heard as a child sitting around the campfire in the backcountry of South Florida. She wants to pass on this heritage to the tribe's young people, to make sure the legends don't die when she and other elders die. So, she has put them in writing. (See legends accompanying this article.) Her son Moses Jumper Jr. is the tribe's poet laureate, with several books of poetry published.

In reflecting on the dramatic changes the tribe has experienced over the past century, Betty Mae Jumper has pointed out that outsiders may have outdated impressions of the Seminoles. "Before we learned how to work within the system, people liked to see us wrestle alligators, make patchwork, operate a few stores, and work in commercial tourist villages where people pay to go see Indians. As long as we were there, people liked to see us. But we learned how to fight for our rights the same as anyone else.

"Some people still like to see us as we were back in the 1920s or 1930s. But many young people are interested in a higher standard of living, as in the outside world. The money we make from cigarettes and bingo goes into tribal improvements so in the future our generation doesn't have to sit by roads trying to sell little baskets or dolls."

Yet she savors aspects of those old times. When asked what she misses the most about them, she said, "The quiet. We used to sit outside and you could hear the hawks and owls and whippoorwills. We would sit around a campfire and listen to the birds and frogs. The peaceful sounds. That was wonderful. That's what I miss the most. The quiet."

Information and quotations in this article were taken from A Seminole Legend: The Life of Betty Mae Tiger Jumper and the Seminole Tribe.

LITTLE FROG

The little green frog was sitting on the edge of the water lilies, sleeping away. A big ol' rabbit came hopping along, came upon the frog and said, "Hi there! Why are you sleeping? It's too pretty a day to sleep. Wake up! Wake up!"

"I don't have to do anything," said the irritated little frog. But that big ol' pesky rabbit kept it up until the little frog got really mad and told him, "I'll fix you up."

So little frog started singing his funny little song or the noise he makes to call the rain. Within a few minutes, the black cloud came and the wind started blowing. Then the rains came and soaked the ol' rabbit so much he got cold and ran home.

Whenever you hear the frogs singing away today, better be near shelter, because they are warning you that rain is coming soon.



LITTLE PEOPLE

When you get very sick the Little People appear at your bedside. No one but the sick person can see them.

They live in the holes of big trees. Thunder always chases and tries to kill them, but they run and disappear into the holes. This is the reason why you'll see lightning striking trees. This lightning will go around and around trying to get the little people. That is why there are so many holes in the trees.

The older people will always tell you never to stand under or against trees when there is lightning or you might get hit.



ORANGE GRASSHOPPERS

Many years ago, during the early part of summer, young orange-colored grasshoppers roamed the grounds everywhere. These grasshoppers would get into anything green. The people got so mad that any time these pesky grasshoppers came around, they would be stepped on and killed.

As the years passed, the grasshopper population lessened. Meanwhile, when people died, they would rise on the third day, and there would always be more people around to step on and kill the grasshoppers.

The orange grasshoppers had a meeting to discuss what was happening and how soon there wouldn't be many of them left. Then one grasshopper came up with a solution: "You all know that people rise on the third day after they die. So we must get on top of the grave so they won't come out. This will make fewer people."

So, to this day, when people die, they don't come up from the grave like they used to. The orange grasshoppers beat them long ago.



Illustrations by Guy LaBree

Jim Billie's Wild Ride

BY PETER B. GALLAGHER

JUST SOUTH OF THE TINY GLADES COUNTY agri-town of Moore Haven, due east of that worrisome earthdam 'round a lake Indians call Big Water, in the flat, green horizon where farms of sugar and cantaloupes play, is a modest ranch-style house where Jim Billie, defrocked six years ago as chairman of the Seminole Tribe of Florida, maintains his headquarters. Amid the chaotic abandon of children and chickens, the ex-chief paces his backyard patio, cradling a cell phone between ear and shoulder, while making sure the toy rifle on 5-year-old son Echo's shoulder is not cocked, gently brushing off 3-year-old daughter Aubee's cheek, backtracking a cocky rooster swaggering out of the pen.

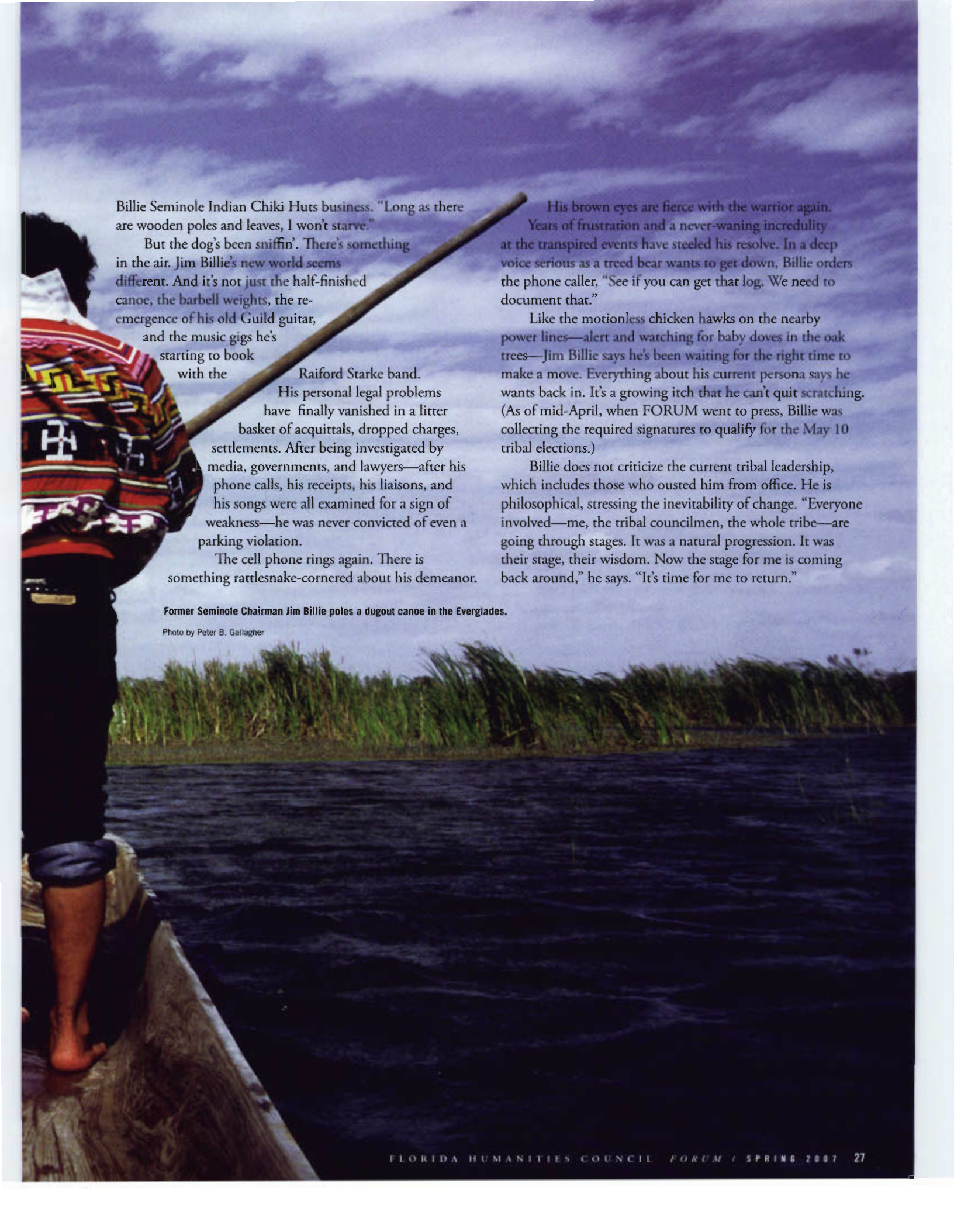
Arguably the most powerful American Indian leader of the 20th century until he was ousted from the Seminole chairmanship in 2001, Billie says he moved here to start a new life as a simple builder of chickees, the traditional Seminole cypress-and-palmetto-thatch huts. Whenever asked his chances of returning to the world of wealth and power that his leadership and vision helped create for the once dirt-poor Seminoles, he would grimace with ambiguity. Music,

jet planes and helicopters, alligator wrestling, Donald Trump. "That's all over," he would say. "Donald don't call me no more. We go to Wal-Mart to have fun."

Once the Western hemisphere's longest-tenured state leader (except for Castro) and Florida's highest-paid elected official (\$330,000 per year), Billie now struggles to make his chickee-crew payroll. His cattle and horses are gone, his old alligator pit empty, the strings rusted on his guitar. An avid pilot who once used planes the way the rest of us use automobiles, Billie is banned from the Big Cypress Reservation hangar. He is publicly avoided by most of his people, although many still talk with him privately. The police force he helped found has orders to arrest him if he enters the five-story tribal headquarters that was constructed under his direction on a pig farm near the Florida Turnpike in Hollywood. The house he built with his own hands at his Big Cypress camp sits vacant, vandalized, and condemned.

"Every time in my life I've gotten down financially, I went back to building chickees, and it brought me back up," he says about his Jim





Billie Seminole Indian Chiki Huts business. "Long as there are wooden poles and leaves, I won't starve."

But the dog's been sniffin'. There's something in the air. Jim Billie's new world seems different. And it's not just the half-finished canoe, the barbell weights, the re-emergence of his old Guild guitar, and the music gigs he's starting to book with the

Raiford Starke band.

His personal legal problems have finally vanished in a litter basket of acquittals, dropped charges, settlements. After being investigated by media, governments, and lawyers—after his phone calls, his receipts, his liaisons, and his songs were all examined for a sign of weakness—he was never convicted of even a parking violation.

The cell phone rings again. There is something rattlesnake-cornered about his demeanor.

His brown eyes are fierce with the warrior again.

Years of frustration and a never-waning incredulity at the transpired events have steeled his resolve. In a deep voice serious as a treed bear wants to get down, Billie orders the phone caller, "See if you can get that log. We need to document that."

Like the motionless chicken hawks on the nearby power lines—alert and watching for baby doves in the oak trees—Jim Billie says he's been waiting for the right time to make a move. Everything about his current persona says he wants back in. It's a growing itch that he can't quit scratching. (As of mid-April, when FORUM went to press, Billie was collecting the required signatures to qualify for the May 10 tribal elections.)

Billie does not criticize the current tribal leadership, which includes those who ousted him from office. He is philosophical, stressing the inevitability of change. "Everyone involved—me, the tribal councilmen, the whole tribe—are going through stages. It was a natural progression. It was their stage, their wisdom. Now the stage for me is coming back around," he says. "It's time for me to return."

Former Seminole Chairman Jim Billie poles a dugout canoe in the Everglades.

Photo by Peter B. Gallagher

When he was first elected chief in 1979, he took a bleeding tribal treasury that had never seen a smudge of black and, over 22 years, built it into a \$650 million annual budget. He has watched silently in the six years since his ouster as his successors expanded gaming operations, making international news with the construction of two Hard Rock Café casinos (in Tampa and Hollywood) and with the recent \$965 million purchase of the global Hard Rock empire.

History has credited Billie as the Indian chief who finally outsmarted the white man, using white law and white courts to introduce the great new buffalo—casino gambling—to American Indian country. He's paid for it. Since the end of the Indian wars, no American Indian has been more investigated by the U.S. government than James Edward Billie. For decades, the FBI looked for everything from Mafia ties to Enron-style corporate fraud. Yet to this day, no agency has proven a single criminal charge against Billie. Not even the IRS; he faithfully paid his taxes on time each year.

It is a fact that during his tenure as tribal chairman, he remained a constant pain in government's ass. He refused all offers to put toxic dumps and landfills on Seminole land, taking instead trans-located gopher tortoises. Planners for pipelines, telephone towers, garbage-truck routes, and flight paths all had to deal with the uncooperative Billie. With his team of anthropologists and lawyers, he could have an impact on any dredge-and-fill project in the state. Before then, Indians had never been consulted, even when highways were dynamited through their lands. During Billie's era,

Indians demanded a seat at every table. The Seminole Tribe paid more money to lobbyists and donated more money to political campaigns than any other entity in Florida in the 1990s.

Billie's greatest "deal" occurred shortly after he was first elected chief in 1979, when a mass grave of 1800s-era Seminoles was unearthed in downtown Tampa during construction for a city parking garage. He negotiated a trade that allowed Tampa to keep the downtown site in return for reburying the remains on a few acres in remote eastern Hillsborough. As soon as the ink dried on the new land's federal-trust designation, Billie began building

on it. The tribe constructed its second high-stakes bingo hall/casino there, as well as a smoke shop and a four-star hotel. Area and state politicians cried foul.

"It was my sovereign right to do anything I wanted on that land," Billie responds. "They were just mad because I didn't tell them ahead of time. If I had, they wouldn't have given me that land."

The tables had turned. Prey had become predator. Over the next decade, Billie led the tribe through the federal system to establish two more reservations, welcomed by the towns of Immokalee and Fort Pierce. He even traded land in Broward County for a postage-stamp piece of asphalt just big enough for a highly successful casino and smoke shop in busy Coconut Creek. No other American Indian tribe has so many non-contiguous federal-trust reservations. The Seminoles have six.

Prior to Billie's tenure as chief, the Indians were living in the worst poverty in the state. "One man was running a cigarette shop on the reservation, and he made more money than the whole tribe," remembers Billie.

Tribal affairs were plagued by disorganization and conflicts of interest. An enormous amount of tribal land along Hollywood's busy U.S. 441 was long-term leased to non-Indian businesses for next to nothing, just to get money in the treasury; and, like many Indian tribes, the Seminoles were heavily dependent on federal welfare. Billie quickly engineered a \$3 million loan, got OKs from both the



Photos by Peter B. Gallagher

Jim Billie breaks a horse in the mid-1990s (above) and wrestles an alligator (below left).

Catholic Church and crime boss Meyer Lansky, built a bingo hall in Hollywood, and watched the money roll in. "The Mafia figured, 'These are the poor Indians. The government stole all their land. Let 'em get it all back,'" Billie recalls. "We never met them. But word was sent to me so we wouldn't worry about it.

"There was already pari-mutuels in Florida. Nobody was going to get their kneecaps broken over our little ol' bingo. Seminole bingo opened on December 14, 1979. By June of the next year, we had paid off the note. And this world changed for the Seminole Tribe."

Shortly after the bingo hall opened, the state of Florida filed suit to shut it down. While Indians around the country watched, Billie employed a bank of lawyers and consultants; and, in 1981, won the case in a



landmark court battle that kicked open gaming's bank vault to every tribe in the country—an estimated \$30 billion industry today. Billie later re-engineered expansions of bingo establishments to include high-stakes video machines and card games.

With the new money rolling in, Billie worked swiftly, aiming for one ideal above all others: “I don’t want to take the government money. They use it to keep the Indian down, uneducated, inexperienced in the business world. You follow their rules and they give you money.” Despite peeling off federal programs, the tribal budget grew from \$500,000 in 1979 to over \$650 million by the time he left office in 2001—more than 90 percent of that from gaming.

While he was chief, the tribe built a school and named it Ah-Fach-Kee (happy) and a museum named Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki (a place to remember) in remote Big Cypress. It built a hotel in Tampa, a turtle farm in Brighton, a tourist swamp ranch in Big Cypress, whole neighborhoods in Immokalee and Fort Pierce. The tribe also expanded its cattle business, began a huge citrus and vegetable farm, and built multilevel office complexes and an aircraft plant. It sponsored annual national “Discover Native America” powwow dance competitions and big-time country music fests. Most of these enterprises, beyond gaming and cigarette-sales projects, were perennial money losers.

“You are talking about Indian people who grew up in poverty, uneducated, working in business for the first time,” Billie says. “You can’t compare that with the outside world that has been in the white man’s business for hundreds of



Everglades champion Marjory Stoneman Douglas and Jim Billie at a Seminole festival in Chokoloskee in the early 1990s. The two were friends.

Photo by Peter B. Gallagher

years. This is experience. We are learning. Those failures will become successes over time.”

By 2000 Billie had won five landslide elections—the last one unopposed. By the end of Billie’s reign, a \$1 million-per-day profit was dropping into Seminole coffers. But the money that rescued his people from poverty was fast becoming a source of distrust and dissension. As the income increased, the harmony in the village decreased. Resentment

built over freewheeling spending and over financial and business dealings, and Billie was pushed out.

“I’ll be back,” he says in a tone that really means *I have to be back*.

“If I can’t get a miracle this time, in four years it might be a different story,” he says. “All my issues are settled. I can’t criticize the tribe or the leaders. They’ve had their time. Now it may be my time again. We’ll see what the people want.”

The garfish are hanging over the simmering cook-fire in his eyes. He points up to the intricate intertwining of leaves along the chickee ceiling, “Every chickee I build is an investment for the future. With the hot weather down here, they all have to be re-thatched every five or 10 years or so. The phone rings every day: ‘Hey Chief, you need to come back and fix it up.’”

Billie puffs out his barrel chest and says in a low, deep, chief-like voice, “I tell ‘em: ‘Sure, the Chief knows what to do.’”

PETER B. GALLAGHER, a free-lance writer and musician, was hired by Jim Billie in 1986 as special projects/communications administrator for the Seminole Tribe of Florida. For 15 years Gallagher supervised the Seminole Tribune and the tribal website and also produced several large tribal events. He left the position in 2001 when Billie was ousted.

Billie (fourth from right) poses with other Seminole officials after his 1999 re-election as chairman. From left: board members Mondo Tiger, Carl Baxley, Roger Smith, and Board President Mitchell Cypress. At center is Moses Jumper, Jr., Seminole Poet Laureate. The three tribal councilmen, at right, are Max Osceola, Jr., David Cypress, and Jack Smith, Jr.





BOBBY HENRY CUTS THE CLOUDS

BY PETER B. GALLAGHER

WHEN SEMINOLE MEDICINE MAN BOBBY HENRY has to make it rain, he tosses a live gopher tortoise into the air. That angers the gods, he says, because “Turtles not s’posed to fly.” When the gods get sufficiently angry, they roar with thunder and hurl spears of lightning. If Bobby keeps throwing that turtle up, or if he adds a frog, as he did when he ended the drought in Tampa several years ago, the furious gods will send down torrents of angry rain.

But there is obviously more to it than that. You and I can throw reptiles or amphibians into the air and nothing would happen. There are words that Bobby utters in an ancient guttural language few can understand and thoughts in his mind that no one can know about. Some of this came to him naturally not long after he was born, in the mid-1930s, out in the cypress swamps near Ochopee on the Tamiami Trail. He doesn’t know why and, like any legitimate medicine man I’ve ever met, doesn’t really want to talk about it. In traditional enigmatic fashion, however, he *will* give you his commercial business card. It says “Rainmaker” and lets you know how to reach him if you need a canoe, totem pole, or a chickee hut built—or if you need it to rain.

But Bobby Henry is not a typical medicine man. None of them are. Take Miccosukee medicine man Sonny Billie. For the first 10 years I knew him, he scowled at me whenever I was around, refusing to allow me to take his photo, until one day he just sat there and let me photograph him blowing into a jar of clear liquid through a long straw. A large man who could place a curse, grant good luck, cure arthritis, and save a baby’s life, Sonny spent his working day operating a bulldozer, stern with an attitude, feared by all. Something told me not to publish that photo; I had an artist do a hand-drawn rendition. Just in case.

And then there was legendary Seminole medicine woman Susie Billie. Though I knew all of her family and had been in her presence dozens of times, she never acknowledged me, would never even *look* at me. Then one day I saw her walking by the side of Snake Road, way south of the Big Cypress reservation, all by herself, looking at the ground. Something told me to stop and I walked up to her with my camera. She looked up and knew I had a

Seminole Medicine Man Bobby Henry leads a ceremony at the Florida Folk Fest in 1997.

Photo by Peter B. Gallagher

question. She held out her hands to show me an herb she had found. From then on, she would hold out her hands whenever she saw me. I call the photograph: "Grandmother's Hands."

Sonny, 75, and Susie, 107, said to be Florida's most powerful medicine people, died in 2003. "One year six people die," Bobby says, shaking his head as if to bolt the thought from his mind. "Boom boom boom!"

How many medicine men and women are left among the Seminoles and Miccosukees, Florida's only legitimate resident tribes? "I don't know," Bobby says. He knows, but he won't say. Where Sonny was menacing and Suzie quiet, Bobby is personable, mixing humor and humility with a smile and handshake for all.

"Bobby Henry is the main medicine man," says former Seminole Chief Jim Billie, who often sent Bobby to the funerals of non-Seminole friends, to minister to and prepare the body for the "cross over" journey. "When he shows up at your event, or anywhere he is around, everyone whispers and nods towards him. Everyone is impressed. Bobby Henry is powerful and very respected by all Indians." During the chief's 22-year reign as tribal chairman, he sent the medicine man and family around the globe, often in a private jet. Bobby is well known to most other tribes and has made his mark in Europe and Asia. (A giant totem pole Bobby carved and emblazoned with his own likeness stands in downtown Singapore to this day.) "Bobby is the most famous medicine man in the world," says Jim Billie.

The tribal elders of the 1930s must have noticed something mystical in the young Bobby Henry. As a little boy, he says he was taken aside and provided special

training. What to eat and how to cure. Thoughts and chants. Discipline and concentration. Hear the owl, respect the panther, turn around counterclockwise, stare with the eye of a snake. Bless the babies, carve the canoe, cook the turtle, drink the sofkee. He learned to shuffle and shove his legs hard into the ground, over and over, with a rhythm called to him by

the earth in the peculiar choreography of the Southeastern Indians known as the Stomp Dance.

Short and strong, with black hair barely graying, a wide toothy smile and a perennial twinkle in his eyes, Bobby Henry holds the precious tablature of tribal medicine in his living-museum brain. He can't talk about it and won't allow it to be written down. But it is there always and these days it bothers him. "Don't know what happens when I'm gone," laments the full-blood Seminole, in a broken English. "Tribe culture may die. I need train people."

It's not happening naturally anymore, he says: "My people'r all scattered. Can't watch 'em like I should." Bobby's people are the Otter Clan, perhaps

the smallest of the seven Seminole clans. Most of the clan took residence in Tampa in the early 1980s on the reservation land off Orient Road where the Seminole Hard Rock Casino stands today. Henry's extended family operated a living-native-village tourist attraction, complete with Florida animals, alligator wrestling, and Seminole cultural shows, situated between the cheapo cigarette shop and the bingo hall/hotel that preceded the Hard Rock.

The giant casino complex pushed the Otters out into dozens of single-family houses the tribe purchased in neighborhoods south of the reservation. Only recently, he says, tribal leaders have promised him another piece



Medicine Woman Suzie Billie hunts for medicinal plants in the early 1990s. Below is photograph entitled, "Grandmother's Hands."



Photos by Peter B. Gallagher

of property, in a Polk County greenway. "I'll have my school," he says, referring to a medicine-man training camp of sorts he has dreamed up in his desperation to preserve the vanishing Seminole culture. "Then my family, we'll be all together again."

The incredible mounds of money dropping into the pockets of tribal members has coincided with a rapid and ongoing disenfranchisement of the tribal culture. And it has created a strange world for the medicine man with business cards and a canary-yellow cell phone in his pocket and a gold chain hanging over his Banlon shirt. An Independent Seminole (who collected no dividend payments) all these years, Bobby admits he recently signed on as an official tribal member, "for the money," he smiles broadly. "I need the money."

I have many fond memories of times I spent with Bobby Henry. Driving all over the state of Connecticut seeking a restaurant to satisfy his ungodly urge for fried chicken. Trying to get a passport for a man born in a palmetto thatch, with no birth certificate. Watching him jump from his pickup truck and scale the banks of a ditch to catch a scared alligator with his bare hands. One memory, however, stands out among the rest:

I will always remember Bobby Henry standing in a thick fog on the football field at Jacksonville Stadium in 1994. The fog was a precursor to a huge thunderstorm the weatherman said was coming in off the Atlantic. By all predictions, it would wipe out the festivities for hundreds of Indian dancers from all over the country and for thousands of spectators. They were at the stadium that day for the Seminole-sponsored Discover Native America (DNA) Powwow. Over



Bobby Henry, appearing in Singapore in the late 1990s as an invited celebrity, carves a totem pole with his likeness from Indonesian hardwood.



Bobby Henry and a Singapore official exchange gifts in front of the totem pole that Henry carved.

Photos by Peter B. Gallagher

near the West Coast, a group of "fake" Indians were having a competing powwow event, hoping to cut into the crowd at the DNA. The organizers had been banned from dancing in the Seminole event because they could not prove affiliation with a federally recognized tribe.

Thunder could be heard in the distance. As one of the event producers, I saw months of hard work about to be drowned. "Bobby," I implored, "can't you make it *not* rain?"

"Sure," he said, pulling a gigantic knife from a scabbard hanging on his side. "Cut the clouds." He walked off by himself, holding the knife high and still, as if slicing the atmosphere as he strolled.

For a good hour he walked through that smoky fog, saying words no one could understand, thinking thoughts no one will ever know, holding his knife high. Indians from all over North America, in traditional tribal garb, stood silently watching him in awe. Suddenly the sun came out. A great cheering commenced among all present. Even the weatherman on TV was amazed the storm passed Jacksonville by. Swelled with rainwater the black thunderhead waited more than 100 miles to finally stall and dump the predicted deluge—right atop the other powwow.

I was there. I saw it. It's true. I

went to shake his hand.

"Bobby Henry!" he said his name to me, ruddy face all twinkling and smiling, the gods having come through for him once again. "Bobby Henry! Good medicine!"

PETER B. GALLAGHER, a free-lance writer and musician in St. Petersburg, worked for the Seminole Tribe as an event producer and communications administrator for 15 years.

Tiger Tiger rock band on stage. Stephen Tiger is at left and Lee Tiger, in the center.



TIGER TIGER ROCKS

THE LINK between Florida's Indians and rock music didn't begin with the Seminoles' recent acquisition of the legendary Hard Rock Café. Decades before that deal went down, two Miccosukee brothers, Stephen and Lee Tiger, were sharing concert stages across the United States and Europe with the likes of Jimi Hendrix, the Grateful Dead, and Rod Stewart.

Combining a Native-American consciousness with a rock-and-roll attitude, the Tiger brothers wrote and sang songs inspired by their cultural heritage and by life in the Everglades where they grew up, the sons of Miccosukee Chief Buffalo Tiger.

Theirs was not a typical Miccosukee family. Their father grew up in a Miami tourist attraction, "Musa Isle Seminole Indian Village," in the 1930s as a noted artist and crafts maker. He then broke with tradition and married outside the tribe and later was elected first chairman of the tribe. There were divorces, and the boys were shuttled from the Miccosukee camps on the isolated Tamiami Trail (U.S. Hwy 41) to the city tourist attraction, one school to another.

Throughout their tumultuous childhood, Stephen and Lee were connected by their closeness of age (one year) and their love of music. They used to listen to their older cousins playing shiny guitars in their chickee out on the Trail. Eventually, just before entering their teen years, the brothers were given

BY PATSY WEST



Stephen and Lee Tiger

plastic guitars—Christmas gifts that had been donated through charity.

They made up chords, listened to the radio, and dreamed of becoming rock stars. "We wanted to grow our hair long and play in a band," Stephen recollected in a 1983 newspaper interview. He was sent to Indian Boarding School in Oklahoma where he joined a band, while Lee played at sock hops with the Agricultural Department band in a Miami high school. They started their first group,

the "Renegades," in 1963 when Stephen was 14 and Lee 13. Lee played bass and Stephen, rhythm guitar.

Around 1966 their group, "Sun Country," played gigs in Miami and in major concert theaters. They were featured in the first Miami Pop Festival with rockers Hendrix, Procal Harum, and Led Zeppelin. They played on the same stage with up-and-coming greats who became legends: The Cream, Country Joe and the Fish, Rod Stewart, and all the rest. In 1968, while playing at The Image on Miami Beach, they were picked up by a record company from New York City, signed a year's contract, and recorded in Woodstock, New York.

In 1974, they cut their first album as the band "Tiger Tiger," named for their paternal grandfather. This recording was made in a Memphis RCA studio next to one being used by Elvis. Stephen wrote nearly all of their original songs, heavy in "Indian" themes. "We sing our heritage," Stephen commented in a 1995 newspaper interview. "Music is a great vehicle for getting across a

message of understanding and getting around stereotypes people have of Native Americans.”

After cutting this album, they left for Los Angeles where they lived for a year playing in clubs. A phone call from their father changed their direction. He asked the brothers to come home to South Florida and help develop Miccosukee Community Outreach Programs.

They created the summer Miccosukee Music Festival on the Tamiami Trail, featuring pop, rock, and country musicians. Soon they added salsa and reggae groups and other Native American participants. The brothers promoted the music festival and Miccosukee alligator wrestling with equal ease. Proceeds from the festival went towards educational needs of the tribe. Stephen became the director of public relations for the tribe. Lee created his own public relations firm.

By the 1980s, the brothers had become South Florida media personalities, bringing Tiger Tiger's sounds into Florida cars and homes by frequently promoting Miccosukee Tourism in radio and TV spots. At the same time, they began actively promoting Miccosukee Tourism and Tiger Tiger's music in Spain, Germany, France, and South America. The band had created a mix of commercial rock and Indian themes and saw a modest success.

By 1990 Tiger Tiger had been featured in a movie soundtrack, cut two albums, and written the music for a National Geographic Television Special. One of Stephen's compositions, "U R Everything 2 Me," won a certificate of achievement from *Billboard* magazine. Stephen described the band as playing, "melodic rock with a blues influence." In 1995, they put together a remix of an old hit by Sounds of American Records (SOAR) and created their single "Space Age Indian." Their popularity skyrocketed.

Their album, "Peace from the Everglades," received two Native American Music Award nominations in 2005. And in June 2006, they were honored with the coveted Lifetime

Achievement Award from the Native American Music Association. Tragically, two weeks later Stephen Tiger died of a head injury suffered in a fall in his home. He was 57.

Stephen left a nearly completed album "Native to This Country." Their father encouraged Lee to complete the recording project, which he did, and then shopped the CD at the MIDEM (Marché International de la Musique), the largest music venue in Cannes, France, where it was well received. The album was released Jan. 1. Lee is reorganizing the band with Stephen's son, Joey Tiger, guitarist Mike Pinera, and Monique Diabo.

PATSY WEST is an ethnohistorian who has written about Florida's Indian people for decades.



Lee and Stephen Tiger at Native American Music Association award ceremony. The brothers were honored with the Lifetime Achievement Award in 2006.

The entrepreneurial Tiger brothers have worked on a number of projects besides their music. Stephen was an accomplished painter, whose art is on exhibit at the Miccosukee Museum. (See page 36.) And Lee has created a newly launched website that provides information on the hundreds of Indian tribes in the United States. This website, www.discovernativeamerica.com, includes maps and detailed histories written by each tribe and is designed to help the tribes market and promote themselves globally.

My Heart Is With Nature

Song lyrics by Buffalo Tiger, Stephen Tiger & Lee Tiger © TTM Enterprises, LLC

Beside the stream I see fish dancing
Look up I see the colors of nature
I see as far as I can see
Oooh oooh
At night the Streams are running against the wind
I see in water moon and stars are dancing with the stream
Oooh oooh
I can see the trees blowing in the wind
Dancing with the streams Moon and stars above
Winds against my face whistle past my ear
At this time I realize I'm a part of nature
Look up it's grey I could not see colors of the trees
Oooh oooh
It seems as though I'm surrounded by grey
The fish that danced before me are hidden by clouded water
Oooh oooh
Nature I once loved has been wounded
There are no more fish dancing in the stream
Brightness of the colors are no longer there
No longer is the moon, stars in water clear
Once I learned that there was another life but I still love the life I once lived
so I keep hanging on, hanging on, hanging on

This song is from Tiger Tiger's CD *Peace From The Everglades*.
Lyrics and photos courtesy of TigerTigerMusic.com

The art of Stephen Tiger

STEPHEN TIGER'S VIVID PAINTINGS have been described as modern-day reflections of traditional Miccosukee culture, with its matriarchal family structure and its closeness to nature. But his early paintings (two of which are shown here) also reflect the love and respect he felt for the grandmother who helped raise him, said his wife Deborah Tiger.

Stephen, who was the son of the first Miccosukee chief, Buffalo Tiger, died in 2006 from a head injury suffered in a fall. He was 57. Although more widely known as a musician, he was also a respected painter whose work is on exhibit at the Miccosukee Indian Village Museum, located on the Tamiami Trail.



Photos of paintings by Dorothy Downs

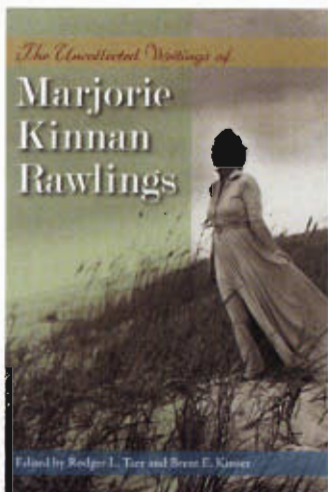
Paintings courtesy Deborah Tiger



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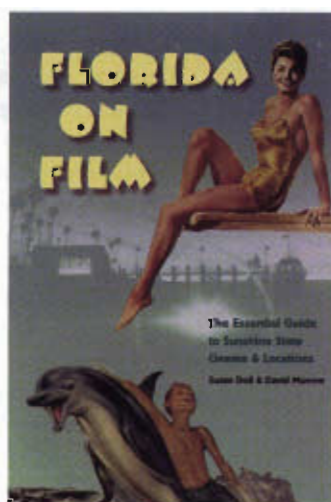
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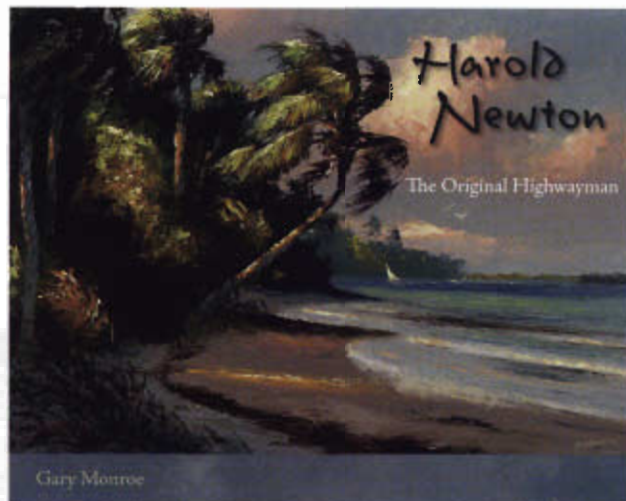


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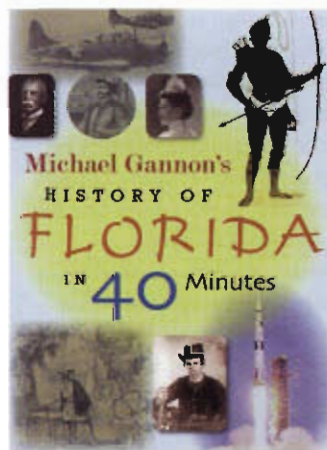
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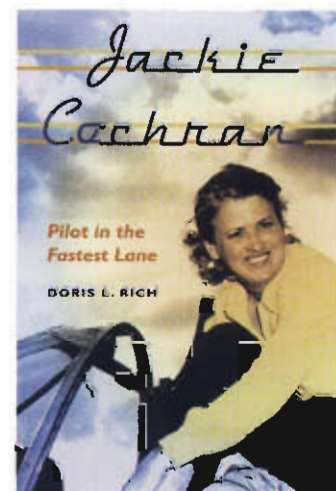
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Wealth enables Seminoles to live life on their own terms

By JESSICA R. CATTELINO

VISITORS TO SEMINOLE RESERVATIONS often marvel at the glass-and-steel tribal office buildings, late-model Hummers and customized Harleys, hopping casinos, and houses under renovation. Such evident prosperity is the result of the tribe's lucrative gaming enterprises, which have enabled Seminoles to escape the poverty of their past. Outsiders often speculate that the tribe's wealth leads to cultural loss. Seminoles, too, worry about their collective future as a culturally distinct people, but often for different reasons. Indeed, some ask why *wealth* would seem to pose a greater challenge than decades of *poverty*.

Many Seminole elders look upon the recent past—especially the pre-gaming 1960s and 1970s—as a “period of cultural debasement,” in the words of tribal citizen Jacob Osceola. During that time, federal government programs promoted assimilation. Baptist missionaries took a more hostile approach to indigenous religion than do present-day preachers. Seminole families struggled to maintain a valued way of life as parents took jobs off the reservation and children traveled out of state to Indian boarding schools.

In the wake of this history, some Seminoles consider gaming to have ushered in a “cultural renaissance.” Culture is never static, but gaming has enabled Seminoles to gain more control over their lives and over the terms of cultural change.

Organized cultural activities have proliferated in the casino era. Art classes teach people of all ages how to sew Seminoles' famous patchwork and weave baskets. Preschoolers drink the traditional corn beverage sofkee, recite the pledge to the



Seminole baby Kwoko Billie is shown in his crib in 1994 with a stuffed-toy alligator.

Photos by Peter B. Gallagher

Seminole flag in their own language, and listen to legends about the antics of trickster rabbit or how the deer got its hooves. The Pemaayev Emahakv Charter School at Brighton, slated to open next fall, will offer instruction in Seminole language, culture, and history. Meanwhile, pupils at the K-12 Ahfachkee School in Big Cypress tend a garden and learn about medicine plants, while Brighton summer students have studied the principles of geometry through chickee construction.

Some casino-era cultural institutions serve non-Seminoles as well. Visitors can learn about Seminole arts and lifeways at the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum at Big Cypress. Last year, the museum opened

its first Seminole-curated exhibit, and this winter it exhibited contemporary Seminole art that ranged from abstract welded metal sculpture to ink drawings.

Cultural events bring together friends and family from the various reservations. Well-attended festivals grow ever more elaborate, from the Miss Seminole princess pageant, with its focus on cultural knowledge, to all-Indian rodeos. At the Tribal Fair and Brighton Field Days, hundreds of contestants of all ages vie for pride, pleasure, and prize money during hours-long clothing contests. Children wave from parade floats, vendors sell Seminole arts, and long lines form to buy fry bread and Indian tacos from Iona's food booth.

“Culture,” however, is not only sustained through easily identified activities like sewing patchwork or attending the annual Green Corn Dance. Culture runs throughout Seminoles' efforts to maintain a distinct and vibrant community, often in

Modern Seminole homes at the Big Cypress Reservation.





Boys play the Seminole game "stick ball" on the Big Cypress Reservation in 1989.

less-obvious ways. Casinos fund many of these endeavors. For example, the nationally recognized Seminole "rez rally" annually brings hundreds of participants together on reservation-based teams to walk or run for diabetes awareness. Throughout the year families gather for tribal intramural basketball and pool tournaments, display collector cars or barbecuing skills at reservation Indian Day celebrations, or cheer for the Miami Dolphins from the Seminole Tribe's private box at Dolphin Stadium. Groups of elders and students travel to destinations such as ancient Indian mounds in Alabama, powwows in New Mexico, or Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C.

In fact, casino-era reservation activities have become so plentiful that families often face scheduling conflicts, and it's easy to fill dresser drawers with commemorative T-shirts from tribal events. These activities reinforce Seminole distinctiveness and cohesion, even while Seminoles shop at the same malls, eat at the same restaurants, and cheer for the same sports teams as their non-Indian Florida neighbors. In 2000, Madeline Tongkeamha, director of the tribe's cultural education department, linked casino money to cultural strength: "I think that all this money frees us to do more with our culture."

Others are less sure, pointing out that new cultural institutions are just that: institutions. They entail centralization, the standardization of culture, and the consolidation of cultural authority. Billy L. Cypress, the late executive director of the Seminole Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki cultural museum, simultaneously expressed pride in the museum and concern that tribal members relied too heavily on programs to provide cultural education for children. "No institution," he said, "can substitute for family."

Lorene Gopher, director of the Brighton cultural department, noted that clan-based differences make it difficult for any teacher to provide appropriate cultural education to a mixed-clan classroom. Her daughter, Charlotte Gopher Burgess, tells her own son that learning Seminole ways is not op-

tional because "this is how I grew up, this is how grandma grew up, this is how you have to do it."

But like other parents inside and outside the tribe, she struggles against the pull of American pop culture. One way Seminoles endeavor to counter outside media pressures is by creating their own media. For example, Seminole Broadcasting produces original documentaries, records and archives oral history, and covers community events that are broadcast to reservation homes.

Of course, new wealth creates dilemmas for any community. Tribal member Moses Jumper, Jr. observed that it's hard to know whom to wave to on rural reservation roads these days, since people are always buying new vehicles. Others worry that too much disposable income discourages young people from valuing work or enables them to buy drugs. For Seminole Board Representative Gloria Wilson, the negative side of gaming is that "it's taken our people from nothing to totally immersed in money," and there has been little time to get "acclimated to the situation." The tribe offers financial education seminars and tax preparation assistance to smooth the transition.

Indeed, gaming has transformed household economies. Yet a cursory glance might miss the ways that some monetary practices reflect distinctly Seminole values. For example, the distribution of casino revenues in per-capita dividends reinforces a long-standing Seminole practice: Political leaders traditionally gained legitimacy by gathering and then evenly distributing resources. Today's resources are more likely cash than meat from a hunt, but the principle holds. Spending also takes culturally specific form when a matrilineal clan uncle hosts his niece's birthday party, or when families purchase new patchwork clothing for the Green Corn Dance.

One of the most dramatic effects of casino wealth is Seminoles' increased control of their own governance. As Joel Frank, former Seminole housing director, put it:

"Gaming has been just one of the means to achieve the tribe's overall goal. It's always been an issue of self-reliance and self-governance." Seminole self-governance is a cultural value, and the use of casino wealth illustrates this in sometimes-unexpected ways.

Before gaming, Seminoles relied upon federal aid to fund basic tribal services. But now the tribe allocates gaming money to contract federal programs, as well as to operate and tailor its own social services programs. The transformation to self-governance is symbolized by the physical change in governmental buildings. The tribal offices long had been located within the federal Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) agency building. But by the late 1990s the tribal government was housed in its own gleaming four-story Hollywood headquarters on the site of an old hog farm. Tribal officials now travel between reservations on a fleet of helicopters, and the tribal jet flies them to faraway meetings. Meanwhile, the BIA Seminole Agency has shrunk in size, staff, and power.

The Seminole government has grown so fast in the casino era that the staff already has outgrown new administrative buildings. By the early 2000s, tribal government employed more than 1,500 staff members (over one-third of them tribal citizens) in non-gaming jobs—to serve a tribe of about 3,300. Seminole young people contemplating college no longer fear that they will need to leave the reservation for work upon graduation, since reservation jobs are plentiful. Tribal offices are active social hubs.

Tribal programs have exploded in number and size. All Seminole citizens can avail themselves of lifelong educational benefits—from preschools to GED programs to college graduate training. And all Seminoles have access to comprehensive health care. Services for elders include hot meal provisions, grocery bill payments, entertainment, and educational travel. From reservation ambulances and law enforcement protocols to health clinics and recreational programs, gaming has spurred an overhaul in governmental programs.

Many administrative programs are designed to reflect Seminole cultural values. The tribal housing department, for example, customizes homes to accommodate extended families and builds backyard chickees or hybrid thatched-roof structures upon request. Unremarkable on the face of it, these measures are deeply meaningful against the historical backdrop of mid-1900s federal programs that had disrupted the matrilineal extended-family structure and women's property



A woman displays Seminole bead art at a festival in the late 1990s.

Photo by Peter B. Gullagher

ownership by constructing dense cookie-cutter housing developments (chickees were prohibited) with leases extended to male heads of nuclear-family households.

A similar story can be told about health care. Clinics on several reservations provide basic services. An annual Wellness Conference offers education and support on topics such as substance abuse, diabetes, and preventive care. Universal insurance covers expenses. And health providers respect the use of indigenous healing methods. Health Director Connie Whidden, who oversees clinics and an array of prevention and treatment programs, remembers the transition from federal to tribal social services: "We can run our programs better... We want control over our health."

Jim Shore, tribal general counsel, summed up Seminoles' approach to governance this way: "We like to be able to plan our own destiny, good or bad." He added, with a wry chuckle: "We can misspend it just as good as the [federal] government."

And, without a doubt, casino-era misspending has concerned many tribal citizens. Tribal political institutions, which were organized in the 1950s based largely on federal models,

Photo: Florida State Archives



have strained to keep pace with economic expansion. A committee recently was established to explore constitutional reform on matters including the reservation-based system of political representation. In recent years, citizens have recalled the Tribal Council budget in a demand for spending transparency, formed committees to review voter-eligibility rules, and voted at high rates in tribal elections (87 percent in 2001, which was typical).

Meanwhile, elections often are hotly contested, and reservation campaign dinners are well-attended. As in any community, some citizens don't care, and others throw up their hands. The point is less that tribal governance is imperfect than that it is the topic of a vibrant, ongoing political conversation. Seminoles are discussing what sovereignty should look like and how best to realize that vision under new economic conditions.

Beyond the reservation borders, casinos have affected Seminoles' relationships with non-Seminoles. One example is charitable giving. The Seminole Tribe gives away some of its governmental revenues, for example to the Red Cross, disaster relief, local schools, and indigenous groups across the continent. Charitable giving is a savvy answer to the question of what Seminoles do with their gaming revenues, and it allows tribal members to repay those who helped them make it through the tough times.

Casinos also have strained outside relationships. Seminoles struggle against a nationwide phenomenon: the emergent stereotype of the "rich Indian." Outsiders expect American Indians to be poor and purely cultural, and they suspect that wealth causes cultural loss. Seminoles resent that most newspaper reports about them, regardless of topic, state the level of per-capita dividends distributed to each tribal citizen. Elders lament that even though no one paid much attention to them while they were poor and selling trinkets to tourists, once they made money they faced scrutiny and resentment. Some Seminoles place telephone orders under false names because they suspect that an Osceola gets

charged more than, say, a Johnson. Like others, tribal citizen Michele Thomas worries that "all we are in public is the rich Indian."

The tribe now fields 30-to-40 inquiries per week from people who think they might be Seminole and want to sign up for citizenship—and many begin by asking about the money. Many tribal citizens are appalled. When her phone rings with such a call, LaVonne Kippenberger, tribal enrollment administrator, outlines tribal citizenship requirements and explains: "If someone in your family were a Seminole Indian, then you would know. If you were a citizen of the Seminole Tribe, you would know."

Indeed, the pillars of Seminole life include knowing who you are. Family identity and self-determination are at the tribe's cultural core, as is being part of a collective past, present, and future. But these cultural values often get overlooked by a public eye trained on the trappings of new wealth. Meanwhile, Seminoles will continue to work out the wrinkles and enjoy the rewards of gaming on their own terms and according to their own values, often beyond the view of us outsiders. The political, cultural,



Photo: Florida State Archives

Just outside a traditional Seminole chickee in Immokalee: a television antenna, in 1983.

and economic stakes of Seminole gaming remain high, but the odds are with the house.

JESSICA R. CATTELINO, an assistant professor of anthropology at the University of Chicago, has conducted research with Florida Seminoles since 1999 and currently is completing a book about the tribe in the post-casino period.







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How the Tribe serves its members

BY TINA MARIE OSCEOLA

THE HISTORY OF FLORIDA'S SEMINOLES is an inspiring and at times gut-wrenching account of challenge, struggle, and survival. Many anthropologists, archaeologists, and historians have spent their careers researching the Seminoles. There are books, journals, and countless professional papers discussing Seminoles in the past tense. The Seminole war periods during the 19th century still intrigue military strategists to this day. Although there is plenty of historical information circulating in the bookstores, archives, and libraries of this country, there is very little available to learn about who Seminoles are today.

The Seminole Tribe of Florida is a government responsible for more than 3,000 members, six reservations (Hollywood, Big Cypress, Brighton, Immokalee, Tampa, and Fort Pierce), and communities throughout Florida. It provides many tribal programs and services for its members living on and off the reservations.

The Tribal Council is the tribe's governing body. Since 2001 it has been under the leadership of Chairman Mitchell Cypress, a resident of Big Cypress, proud veteran of the U.S. armed forces, and a tribal cattleman. He serves with Vice Chairman Moses Osceola, Hollywood resident and businessman. The other three voting members include the Big Cypress councilman, David Cypress; the Hollywood councilman, Max Osceola; and the Brighton councilman, Andrew Bowers. The council is also comprised of non-voting liaisons that represent smaller tribal communities.

The council funds direct tribal services such as housing, health, education, elderly services, family services, and utilities. Each reservation has its own water treatment center, government buildings, and back-up generators for its facilities.

The council also funds the Seminole Police, Fire, and Emergency Management departments. The police department enforces the criminal codes for the State of Florida on each reservation, as well as providing protective services for its members, the council, and dignitaries.

Some of the tribal support services include an aviation department; the Seminole Broadcasting department; and a newspaper, the *Seminole Tribune*. The Historic Resources Department coordinates two Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum facilities, the Historic Preservation Office, and Florida Seminole Tourism.

The Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum on the Big Cypress Reservation is the tribe's flagship facility and is home to a large collection of artifacts and archives as well as a state-of-the-art exhibit area concentrating on the 1890s period of Seminole culture and life. The museum has been accepted as an applicant for accreditation by the American Association of Museums; if successful in this endeavor, it will be the nation's first accredited tribal museum.

This is only a small peek into the inner workings of the Seminole Tribe's governmental functions. For more information log on to: www.semtribe.com or www.ahtahthiki.com.

TINA MARIE OSCEOLA, a member of the Seminole Tribe, is executive director of the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum.

WHAT IS SOVEREIGNTY?

In 1831 the U.S. Supreme Court declared that Indian tribes are "domestic, dependent nations." In the 176 years since then, the government has tried to interpret exactly what that means. Generally speaking, tribes enjoy a sovereignty that is subject to limitations imposed by federal statutes and court decisions. Thus the term "Indian self-determination" is perhaps more appropriate.

Indian tribes have broad latitude in areas where the courts and Congress have confirmed their right to operate—including gaming, law enforcement, housing and health programs, economic development, etc. Indian tribal governments have been declared exempt from various state and federal taxes and other restrictions.



The Seal of the Seminole Tribe of Florida

Photo: Florida State Archives

But Indians as individuals are citizens of the United States with all rights and obligations of citizenship, as well as citizens of their tribal nations, according to the 1924 federal Indian Citizenship Act. Indians are eligible to vote and hold office, are subject to federal and state taxes, must obey white laws when off the reservation, and were required to register for military service during the years of the draft. At the same time Indians do not lose any of their rights or immunities as members of a given tribe nation through treaties or other arrangements. For example, in some states Indians are not subject to hunting and fishing restrictions that limit the general citizenry.

—Harry A. Kersey, Jr.



Seminole Poling Canoe by E. Beavers from the collection of Perri L. Giafalone

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Traditions, 1992



Man in Canoe Approaching Village, 1992

The art of Noah Billie

NOAH BILLIE WANTED HIS ART TO BE PRESERVED as a part of the Seminole cultural legacy. "He said he wanted it kept in a museum where all Seminole children could see where their past came from. Never forget that. And be proud of where they came from," recalled his wife, Brenda.

Billie, who died in 2000 at the age of 51, got his wish. Sixteen of his oil paintings are on display at the tribe's Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum. They reflect his life as a Seminole and a Vietnam War veteran. Billie, a Marine who saw combat, was exposed to deadly chemicals dropped by U.S. aerial forces during the "scorched earth" phase of the war, from 1967 to 1970. He was on total disability following his military service, suffering from numerous ailments and ultimately dying from complications of diabetes.

Billie's friends and relatives said he did not talk about his feelings, but expressed them through his art.

The above information is taken from the Noah Billie Commemorative Booklet, published by the Seminole Tribe in 2000.



Seminole Warrior, 1993



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TWO POEMS BY
MOSES JUMPER, JR.

RIVER OF PEACE

In my early years as a young boy,
I climbed the willow trees that covered
The river's edge.

I would watch the squirrels play in the
Mighty oaks and I would laugh as they
Dropped acorns into the gentle river below.

King Fisher, O-pa, snake bird and hawk,
They would all sit high in the cypress
Tree as they peered down ready to scoop up
An unsuspecting meal.

The river gently flowed, going nowhere,
Yet, bringing life to the glades. The
River was peaceful and so was I.

It was a good time to be alive...

Then one day they came. They surveyed
The land and said "This river goes no
Where and is useless." We will dig a
Larger canal and will let it run to the sea.

The oaks went down as did the cypress and
Willow tree.

Soon the land became dry and parched.

O-pa was gone as well as King fisher,
Snake bird and hawk...
I cried, for what the giver of breath
Had given, we destroyed and I knew they would
Be no more...

WE ARE AS ONE

I am not bordered except by the vast open sky;
The veins of rivers and streams run through me as they do you.
I harbor in my mind the idea of love and respect for the precious gift of life.
My nostrils swell to their capacity, filling my lungs with air you breathe.
Me and my brothers the Bear, Wildcat and Deer, are as one.
I am part of you and you are part of me.
And with this Mother Earth, we are as one.

MOSES JUMPER, JR., *Poet Laureate of the Seminole Tribe*, is author of
Echoes in the Wind: Seminole Indian Poetry of Moses Jumper, Jr.

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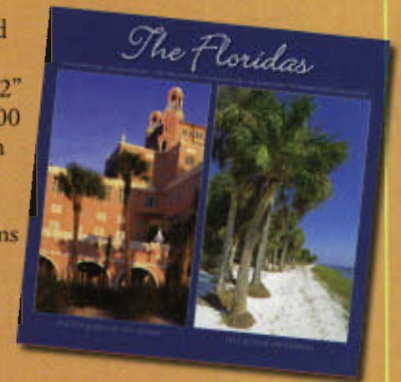


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