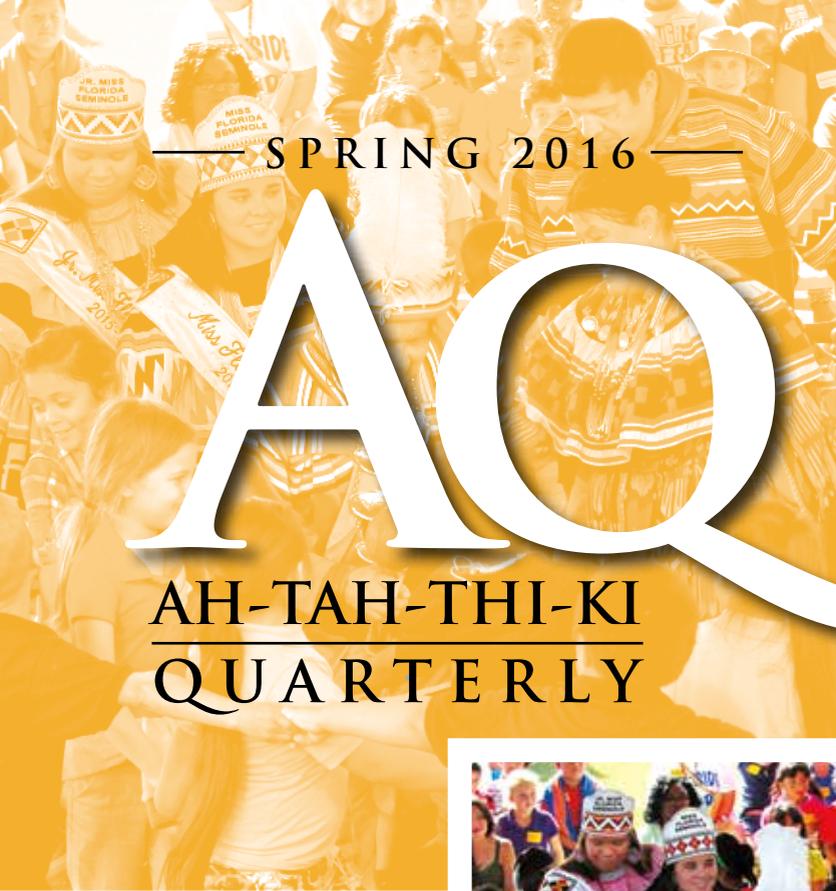


— SPRING 2016 —

AO

AH-TAH-THI-KI
QUARTERLY



Tribal medicine man Bobby Henry leads a friendship stomp dance at the Museum's 18th annual American Indian Arts Celebration. Credit: Eileen Soler, Seminole Tribune



SEMINOLE TRIBE OF FLORIDA
AH-TAH-THI-KI
M U S E U M
A PLACE TO LEARN. A PLACE TO REMEMBER.

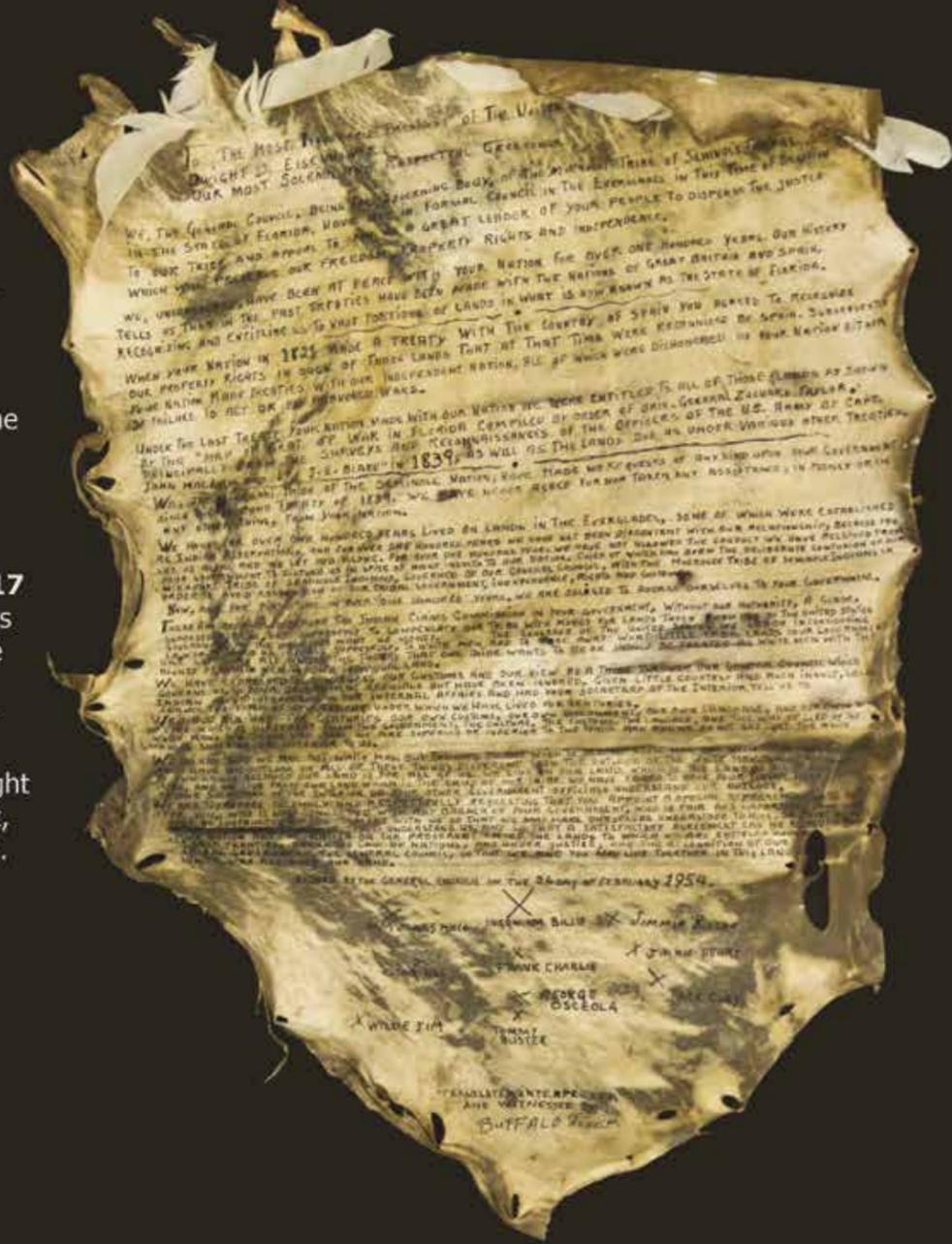
2015 ANNUAL REPORT

Come See the Buckskin Declaration!



Presented to President Eisenhower in 1954, the Buckskin Declaration is an important document in the history of Tribal Sovereignty. It is a request by the Seminoles of Florida to live their lives as they see culturally fit. On loan from the Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library.

It is located in the the **Struggle for Survival, 1817-1858** exhibit which explores the Seminole War years. The Seminoles fought for their right to their lands and their way of life. Although a protracted and dangerous fight with the Federal government, the Seminoles ultimately win.



On Display through Nov. 24th, 2016

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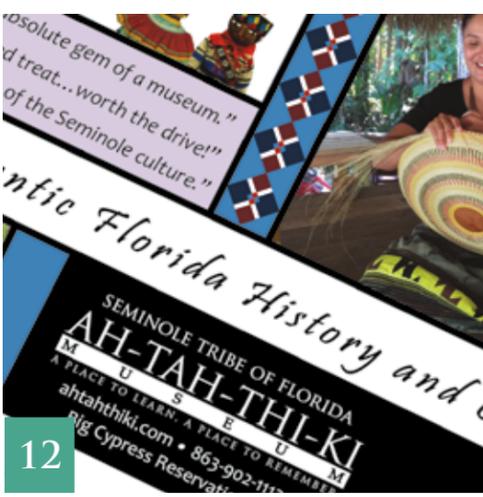
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Big Cypress Seminole Reservation
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(863) 902-1113 / www.ahtahthiki.com



Director's Note

Dr. Paul Backhouse, *Museum Director*

As communities around the globe become more connected with one another, they are arguably becoming more homogenous. Celebrating cultural diversity and telling the Seminole Story has never been more important. Looking at the pages of this report I am proud of the entire Museum staff for the passion and creativity with which they embraced their important roles in telling that story. There is much left to tell. I was absolutely amazed during the rainy summer months of 2015 when a Museum Oral History interview with Tribal elder and respected Medicine Man Bobby Henry revealed a completely different, and much darker, narrative account of Osceola's demise (for more information visit www.semtribe.com/SeminoleTribune/ and search for the August



2015 issue). As the 'official' colonially authored history of the Tribe fades new narratives are emerging and 2015 demonstrates that visitors want to engage with these stories personally. The co-curated exhibition of contemporary patchwork ('It's not a Costume') underscored that the Tribe is more than capable of

presenting its own culture in new and engaging ways. Record numbers of people agree, and we welcomed visitors from 56 countries through our doors during 2015, a 20% increase over 2014. The dramatic jump in visitation is made even the more remarkable by the fact that we closed over the summer to make some much needed renovations to our beautiful facility. The Seminole story is now global. I hope you enjoy this issue and encourage you to connect with us and the Seminole Tribe *AQ*

Looking Ahead

Kate Macuen, *Assistant Director*

It is always valuable to look back at our accomplishments over the past year. We can learn a lot by taking a moment to pause and reflect on the success of goals and evaluate projects that perhaps needed some fine-tuning in order to better serve our community. As you read this AQ, our Museum staff is already hard at work using what they've learned over the past year to set new benchmarks and goals to better our Museum.

I myself am using this strategy as I begin a new position as Assistant Director this spring. For the past 6 ½ years I have had the privilege of working for the Tribal Historic Preservation Office as the Collections Manager. I am excited to be continuing with the Tribe as I join the Museum and its innovative and professional team! Working in the museum field over the last 14 years has strengthened my understanding for the critical role museums play in our communities. I am proud to be part of the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum in an age where museums are challenging old ways of thinking and creating programs and exhibits that are relevant, interactive and diverse. The Museum's future is bright as we continue to be a place that celebrates, preserves, and shares the Seminole story and creates an engaging and dynamic environment for our community and visitors. *AQ*



Museum guests speak with Associate Justice Moses Jumper Jr. and Vice Chairman Mitchell Cypress (Left to right) at the Guy LaBree: Painted Stories of the Seminoles exhibit opening.

AQ SPRING 2016

EDITOR

Kate Macuen

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- Paul Backhouse
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Finding New Ways to Tell the Seminole Story and Reach New Audiences

By Annette Snapp, Operations Manager

The Administration Division of the Museum has been quite active over the last year. I feel that many of our achievements are, in fact, noteworthy. Please enjoy this summary of our accomplishments for 2015.

Cameras in Cypress Dome behind the Museum Capture Wildlife Images

In early January, staffers from the Environmental Resources Management Department (ERMD) installed two wildlife cameras in the cypress dome at the Museum. Within a very short period of time, we were enjoying images of the wildlife that inhabit or pass through this beautiful wetland. Many of the best images have been uploaded to the monitor near the



Wildlife cameras capture a panther in the cypress dome.

door to the boardwalk so that visitors can get a preview of the animals they might see during their walk to or from the village. We were pleasantly surprised to see photos and short video clips of not just one panther, but a couple of these majestic animals moving together through the cypress dome! Later we caught a glimpse of a bobcat! Other animals seen on photos from these cameras include: bobcat, turkey, raccoon, fox, coyote, squirrel, bear and opossum. While our visitors may not see all of these animals



Wildlife cameras catch a bobcat strolling near the edge of Museum's cypress dome

while enjoying the boardwalk, they should know, nonetheless, that animals are watching them!

ERMD also provided the Museum with interpretive support by supplying a rack and informational brochures about the wildlife typically found within this region of Florida. These have been so well-received that we have been working hard to keep the rack filled with informational cards!

We are pleased to have this enhanced interpretive information because of the increased value for our visitors. After all, learning about the Seminole Tribe involves learning about the environment.

Marketing Initiative: FGCU Professor Chris Wright Isak

In 2015, Florida Gulf Coast University (FGCU) professor Dr. Chris Wright Isak generously offered to help the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum with their marketing by tasking one of her marketing course classes with creating marketing programs for the Museum. We worked with Dr. Wright Isak throughout the year to gain a deeper understanding of marketing and the unique offerings of the Museum within the market.



Dr. Chris Wright Isak, FGCU.

To learn more about the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki class members visited the Museum in October for a firsthand look. The visit gave them an opportunity to learn more about the Museum and the Seminole Tribe so their final marketing projects would reflect a deeper understanding of this institution. In December, we attended the student's final class at FGCU to see marketing team presentations about the Museum and their ideas for improving our visibility in the market. We plan to utilize their best ideas to better market the Museum in the future. This provided a learning opportunity for FGCU students while simultaneously providing us with the latest in marketing strategies under the guidance of a seasoned professional. We look forward to future collaborations!

Florida Association of Museums (FAM) Annual Meeting



In early 2015, Elizabeth Gelman of the Florida Holocaust Museum in St. Petersburg invited the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum to participate in the Florida Association of Museum's Annual Meeting Session: **Addressing Sensitive Topics in Museums**. At this session, the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum and the telling of the Seminole Story was featured prominently as an example of the difficulty, but necessity, in telling contextualized, authentic stories. By looking only at more recent history, people may not understand the role of the American government in perpetrating the attempted genocide of the Native Americans of Florida and how this difficult past impacts the Tribe today. As museums, it is our responsibility to provide the public with accurate and factual information. Here at the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum, we strive to deliver the authentic perspective of the Seminole Tribe and having the opportunity to share the story accurately is one we value highly.

Also at the FAM Annual Meeting, two of the Museum's staff received well-deserved awards for their hard and inspired work. Ms. Carrie Dilley, Visitor Services and Development Manager, received the OUTSTANDING NEW PROFESSIONAL Award for new marketing initiatives, enhancing the visitor experience and programming to encourage more visitors. And Ms. Tara Backhouse, Collections Manager, received the MUSEUM EXCELLENCE Award for her efforts to repatriate numerous artifacts that originated from other Native American Tribes. She worked tirelessly for five years – a task which she completed in 2015 – to return these artifacts. The entire Museum team could not be more proud of the award-winning work of these two staffers.

Reopening on Indian Day

The Museum closed to the public for six weeks to conduct major renovation projects (see the Facilities Division for more detail on renovations). When we re-opened on Indian Day, September 25th, world-renowned photographer Russell James joined us for our grand re-opening. In fact, he premiered "Seminole Spirit" which is a short video highlighting the Big Cypress Reservation and features supermodel Behati Prinsloo. This re-opening was also graced with the presence of Seminole royalty. In attendance were Victoria Osceola Benard, Little Miss Seminole, Skyla Osceola, Junior Miss Florida Seminole and Destiny Nunez, Miss Florida Seminole. All joined in the celebration.



Meet the photographer: (left to right) Skyla, Victoria and Destiny, Russell

Seminole artist Elgin Jumper joined the festivities to show visitors his style and painting techniques while they watched. Seeing an artist in action is a treat and we enjoyed having the opportunity on this important day.



Seminole Royalty watches as artist Elgin Jumper paints

All of these achievements and more took place in 2015. Each accomplishment helped us tell the Seminole story to more people or in a unique and different way. We strive to do this in all of our actions each and every day at the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum. **AQ**

2015: An Unforgettable Year in Retail

Rebecca Petrie, Retail Manager

The mission of the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum Store is to generate revenue to support the exhibits and programs of the museum, provide continuing educational materials, and enhance the knowledge, appreciation and understanding of the Seminole people, their history and culture.

2015 was a busy year for the Retail section: from attending and presenting at both state and national meetings of the Museum Store Association to designing, ordering and selling new custom merchandise, adding an online store, to quite literally having the walls come down around us, this will be a hard year to forget.

In March, our Retail Manager Rebecca Petrie represented the Museum as a panelist at the 60th Museum Store Association (MSA) Annual Conference and Expo learning session “Buying Authentically: Looking Beyond the Obvious When Buying with Cultures in Mind”. Along with the Ah-Tah-Thi Ki Museum, the panel included representatives from the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco (California), Museum of Contemporary Native Arts (New Mexico) and the Anchorage Museum (Alaska) in a session aimed at informing retail managers of the importance of cultural sensitivity when selecting merchandise for resale. Some of the topics discussed were: When exhibitions and collections are tied to a culture or ethnicity, buyers have an obligation do their best to ensure that museum store products are representative. But, there are learning curves and challenges for buyers seeking culturally authentic products. How do you know what is authentic even when members of a particular culture don’t agree? In an effort to remain authentic can a museum store be profitable? Can it avoid buying objects that represent stereotypes? The panel of seasoned MSA buyers explored sensitivities, philosophies and strategies for buying products that represent various cultures.

Also at the convention, Petrie became the MSA’s Florida Chapter president; in addition it was an opportunity to meet with vendors to discuss potential new merchandise for the Museum Store, while discovering new trends in online retail and social media. All of this information was shared upon returning to the Museum.

In August, both Petrie and Retail Assistant Manager Ann Barrett attended the MSA’s Florida Chapter meeting in Key West. Petrie put together the educational sessions which featured print on demand, working with publishers and self-publication. The featured speakers from Schiffer Publishing, The Lobster Trap Art, Bert Price Design, and the Harn Museum. Each spoke on an aspect of printing and/or publishing for museum stores as a way to increase revenue while using our limited resources most effectively. In addition, several vendor members of the association were in attendance displaying their offerings.



Museum Store Association Florida Chapter members at the Custom House, Key West, FL

Late spring kept us busy with several projects including the Museum Guide’s translation and printing in German. By the Museum’s reopening in September, the Guide, or Museumsführer was complete and ready for distribution. We immediately began the process again for a French translation (Guide du Musée) which was completed by the end of 2015.

Throughout the spring and into the summer we worked with the Tribe’s Information Technology (IT) Department on the development and design of our online store. We wanted the

look of this store to fit seamlessly with the Museum’s website and IT made it happen. We also worked with the Accounting Department to ensure that all payments would be processed correctly. While the design was being worked on, we began adding merchandise ensuring that once everything was in place the web-store could go live. At 4:34pm on September 3, 2015 the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum Store officially went online. At 8:30am on Friday, September 4 the online store was connected to the Museum’s website and at 10:20am the first order was processed and shipped, the customer received his product with Saturday’s mail.

In late summer Retail began preparing for the Museum closure. As the Museum needed to be completely emptied we used the opportunity to conduct a thorough inventory as merchandise was boxed and moved from the store to our storage shed. The decision was made that the temporary closure would be the perfect occasion to remove the interior window and wall that separated the Museum Store from the lobby- another of the long term goals of Retail. Other upgrades included painting the walls of the store and restroom hallway a bright, clean white and moving the jewelry case and cash register so our staff has better sightlines of the store and galleries. See the Facilities report for more details!



Museum Store before the remodel



Museum Store after the remodel

The Museum closure also afforded the time to complete one of Retail’s 2016 goals of replacing the admission desk with one that is ADA (American’s with Disabilities Act) compliant. Working with the Seminole Tribe’s interior designer we were able to obtain a desk that offers a lower front counter which is easily accessible and allows staff to greet visitors at eye level.



Admission Desk before

Admission Desk after

With these projects completed, what was intended to be a five year plan for Museum lobby improvements (which began with the new murals behind the admission desk achieved by the Collections Section in 2014) was accomplished in less than three years.

Summer brought planning for the annual American Indian Arts Celebration (AIAC) scheduled for November 6th and 7th. Traditionally Retail has been tasked with finding and registering vendors, maintaining the gate admissions and scheduling school and adult tour groups for this event. This year we were asked to expand the food offerings beyond the established favorites, so we located a food truck facilitator who booked two vendors for the event. With an additional frozen sweets seller we doubled our food vendors from three to six.

The food vendors were “Nuts About Sugar” and “The Snack Place” as well as the always favorite Iona’s Frybread, Almira & Louise Billie and Susie Jumper under the chickees. We had a total of 60 vendors sign up for AIAC, compared to 2014’s 41 vendors!

Throughout the year Retail continued to schedule and book both student and adult group tours. AIAC was an excellent opportunity to offer more “bang for the buck” to these groups. Working with Melissa Sherman, Tourism Promotional

RETAIL



Iona's Fry Bread at AIAC



AIAC vendor offering hand-cranked sewing machines



Traditional jewelry is always a favorite with AIAC attendees

Manager at Florida Seminole Travel, we were able to reach out to new schools in addition to encouraging those who contacted us. In August a mass email was sent to Broward county educators announcing AIAC and how to book Museum field trips. The results were remarkable - we were able to increase our school group visitation for AIAC from 99 off-reservation school children in 2014 to 503 this year while adult groups almost doubled from 2014's 33 to 65.

Throughout the year our line of custom, Seminole inspired merchandise continued to grow and as word spread, sales grew as well. We tried our second rhinestone embellished ladies t-shirt this year featuring an adaptation of patchwork in medicine colors. Due to the popularity of the stock magic T-Shirts which we have been selling with the Museum logo since 2013, we opted to add a custom t-shirt. Working with the vendor this shirt shows a Seminole alligator wrestler adapted from a vintage Musa Isle postcard. And while on the subject of postcards, in conjunction with the Its Not a



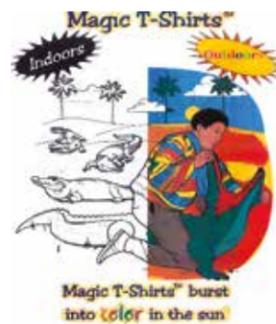
School buses line up at AIAC

Costume exhibit, we added to our line of custom cards with one showing a big shirt and a woman's shirt and cape. We also tried several new pilot projects including eyeglass cases and iPhone 5 cases which depicted Seminole patchwork designs. For the Christmas holiday we continued the tradition of a Seminole Patchwork inspired ornament – hot pink with black and gold, based on a pink satin jacket in the Museum's collection and continued sale of the Seminole Doll ornaments.



2015 Patchwork inspired ornament

The Museum Store also hosted a book signing for our own Carrie Dilley in celebration of her long anticipated and award winning *Thatched Roofs and Open Sides: The Architecture of Chickees and Their Changing Role in Seminole Society*. The event was attended by friends and family as well as those interested in historic architecture.



Custom Magic T-shirt



Patchwork design eyeglass case

It has indeed been a busy and productive year for Retail section. Even with the closure our calendar year net sales and profit margin showed an increase, numerous projects were accomplished and our custom merchandise program continues to be strong and appreciated by the community. 2015 was a year of achievement which leads us into a bright 2016. AQ

CALENDAR

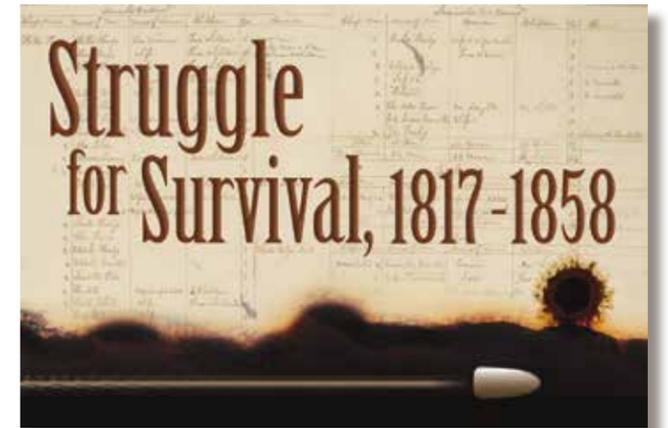
On Display this Spring! Exhibitions and Events at the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum

WEST GALLERY

Struggle for Survival, 1817-1858
December 14, 2015 – November 24, 2016

Many Seminoles recount the three Seminole Wars as one long war of resistance. This exhibition explores the tactics the Seminoles used to fight the U.S. government and the tools they needed to survive in the hidden Everglades hammocks. Oral histories of the stories and traditions passed on from the war years provide the Seminole voice to a history largely written by others.

This exhibition will also feature the Buckskin Declaration, which was presented to President Eisenhower in 1954. This document is a declaration of sovereignty and the right of the Seminoles to live their lives as they see culturally fit.



COMING SOON:
Selected Works of Jimmy Scott
Osceola (May, 2016) and
Pemayetv Emahaky Charter School
Traditional Arts Exhibition
(June, 2016)

NOOK GALLERY - Selections from the Collection

Telling Our Stories – An Oral History Exhibit
November 14, 2015 – May 10, 2016

Much of Seminole history is passed down through the generations via storytelling. The Tribe recognized the importance of preserving these oral histories for future generations and developed an oral history program at the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum. This exhibition shares some of those oral histories and the important traditions they help to maintain.



MOSAIC - Community Art Gallery

Ahfachkee School Art Exhibition 2016
March 6, 2016 – May 22, 2016

Students from pre-kindergarten through 12th grade of the Ahfachkee School on the Big Cypress Reservation showcase their artwork. Studying some of the world's most recognized artists these students create their own visual interpretations. These beautiful pieces reflect a wonderful sense of color, light, and design.



For more information about any of these events, please contact Development and Visitor Services Manager, Carrie Dilley at 863-902-1113, Extension 12211 or CarrieDilley@semtribe.com

Looking Beyond the Numbers: Who Are Our Visitors?

By Carie Dilley, Visitor Services and Development Manager

2015 came with many proud achievements for the Visitor Services and Development section. Arguably one of the most important was our dramatic increase in visitation for the year. The bottom line numbers are of course critical, but what I personally feel is our biggest accomplishment is how we got more (happy) people through the door in the first place. My section and I feel beyond lucky that we got to share the Seminole story with countless new visitors in 2015 and hope they in turn shared what they learned at the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki with their friends and loved ones.

We started off 2015 as a newly restructured, and fully-staffed, section within the Museum. With our section encompassing marketing, membership, visitor services, education, and outreach, we began to take a closer look at our numbers and how, if at all, we could increase Museum visitation. Incredibly, we experienced a 20% increase in visitation in 2015 compared to 2014. Visitation in 2014 and 2013 were similar, only varying by a few numbers. In 2015 we also saw a jump of 13% in Seminole Tribal member visitation and over triple the number of native non-Seminole visitors for the year. Visitation trends certainly shift in time. These numbers had been declining around 10% or more per year since 2009 and 2015 visitation put us back in line with our 2012 numbers.

Many factors may impact our annual visitation, some of which are out of our control. Weather, fuel prices, political volatility, and the economy all impact how much people travel. Our visitors come not only from within Florida and the United States, but also from cities and countries from around the world. These big picture factors shed light on why our numbers might vary so much from year to year, but our own actions can play a huge role in our visitation numbers as well. Did we have an effective marketing plan and interesting advertisements? Did Tribal members feel connected to their museum? Did we have engaging exhibits and did we market them to the right audiences? Did we provide outstanding

customer service? Did we offer special promotions, exciting programs and events? The fact that we could answer “yes” to all of these questions in 2015 helped us stand strong in our visitation numbers despite external factors.

How Did You Hear About Us? Report

In 2015, we started tracking our visitation trends more closely in the “How Did You Hear About Us?” report. A simple revamping of this classic tool helped us better understand on our visitation markets. Tour guides started entering the data on a regular basis into an Excel spreadsheet, so now our visitor’s zip code, country of origin, and how they heard about us are easily tracked. We started this new system in March and found out that nearly a quarter of our visitors signed the guest book. This number is pretty remarkable considering a good percentage of our visitation comes from groups and families where it is likely that only one person in the party would sign in. Word of mouth attributed to 30% of our visitor base, which was second only in number to the Internet.

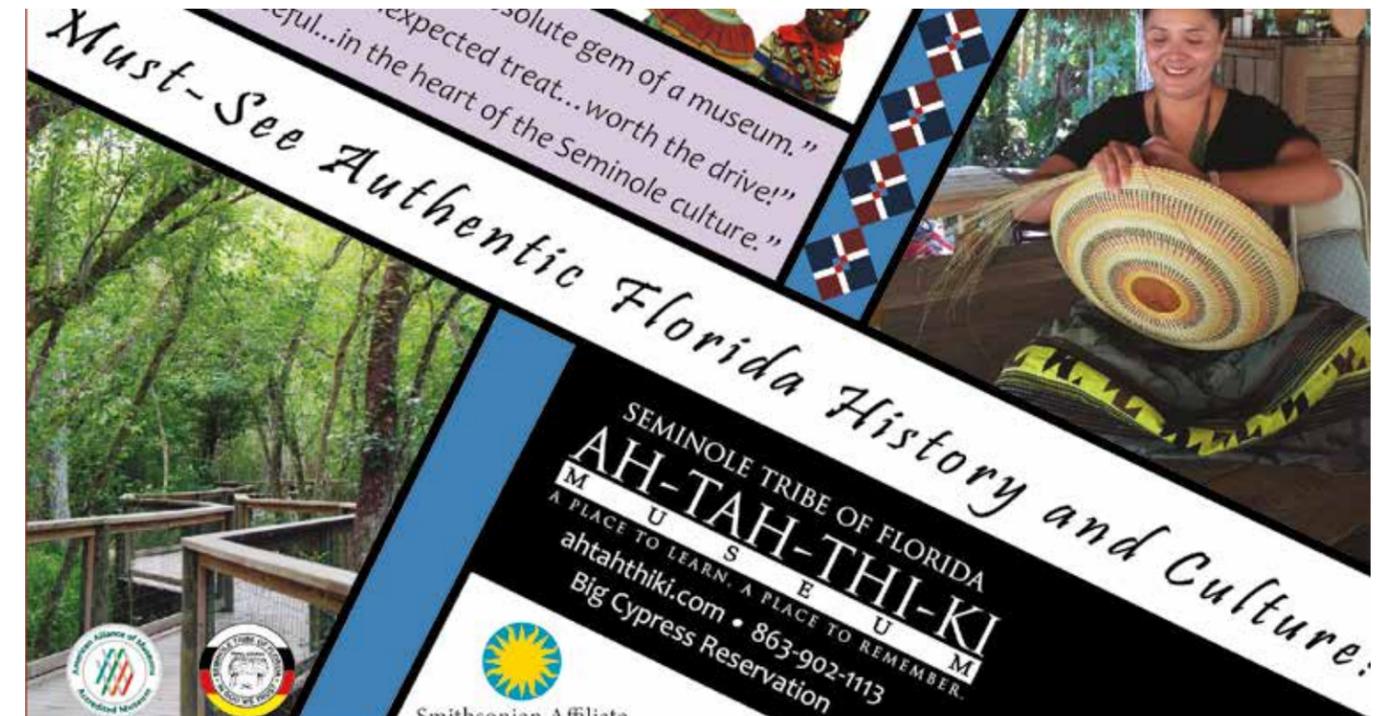
Based upon this report, we were able to approximate that 79% of our visitors come from within the United States. Our international visitors were quite diverse, representing 56 different countries. In 2015, we saw that 26% of our international visitors were from Germany, 13% from Canada, 10% from the UK, and about 5% each from France, Switzerland, and the Netherlands. By taking a look at world regions as a whole, we found that our visitation distribution was:

Europe	72%
Canada	12%
South America	6%
Caribbean	3%
Asia/Oceania	3%
Middle East/Africa	3%
Central America	less than 1%
Mexico	less than 1%

These numbers are quite unique. When looking at international visitation to the state of Florida, the largest number of tourists are from South America, followed by Canada, and then Europe—all within close range of each other. Germany by far leads our international visitor front, yet ranks number seven for the state of Florida. We are just beginning to track this type of data closely, and are excited to see how we can use it most effectively moving forward.

via traditional marketing venues—magazines, guidebooks, maps, billboards, brochures, television, radio, and newspapers combined. In the past, the bulk of our marketing budget was spent on print and billboards. With shifting trends, we found that those methods were less effective for us than the Internet.

The Development Assistant took charge of our social media accounts and produced an abundance of engaging Facebook



An example of our new advertising style, created in-house by the Development Assistant, Virginia Yarce

Marketing

January marked the employment of a Development Assistant within our section. Our Development Assistant has a keen eye for design and experience creating graphics. By working closely together, over the course of the year we began to create nearly all of our advertisements in-house. This not only saved money, but ensured that the proper message was being shared with the world. The ads created by the Development Assistant were used in print, online, and for our promotional needs.

Looking at our “How Did You Hear About Us Report?” helped clue us in on where to focus our marketing efforts. According to this report, the number one way in which our visitors found out about us in 2015 was the Internet, with 30% of our visitors selecting this choice. Only 23% of our visitors discovered us

posts week after week. We not only began to see more “likes” and comments, but a dramatic increase in followers. Facebook became a critical part of our marketing plan for the year, and we advertised and promoted all of our events in depth on our social media platforms. Our new Education Coordinator came on board in November and developed our Twitter account in much the same way.

Not only did we spruce up our Facebook and Twitter accounts, but we monitored our other existing forms of online presence very carefully. We made regular updates to our Museum



TripAdvisor Certificate of Excellence badge.

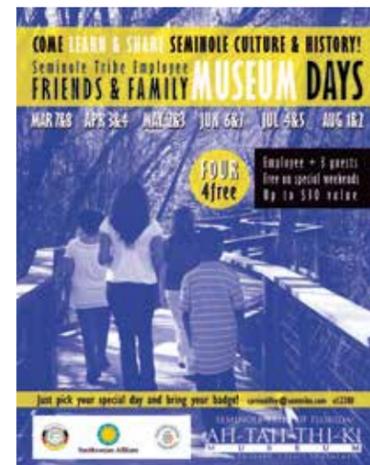
VISITOR SERVICES

website, tracked our number of Yelp visitors, made sure we were represented accurately in all maps and other website listings, and responded to all reviews on TripAdvisor. In the summer, we were honored with a TripAdvisor Certificate of Excellence award. This prestigious award honors businesses that consistently receive outstanding reviews on TripAdvisor—the world’s largest travel site. We proudly display our badge on our website and at our Museum facility.

Last, but not least, collaborative efforts with Dr. Chris Wright Isak’s marketing class at FGCU gave us much food for thought for our upcoming marketing initiatives. See the Administration Section’s report for more details on this collaboration.

Employee Days

In March of 2015, we instituted “Seminole Tribe Employee Friends and Family Days.” The first weekend of the month (March thru August) we offered Seminole Tribe of Florida employees and up to three of their guests free admission to the Museum. Most Seminole Tribe departments operate on a Monday to Friday work week, so by offering this perk on the



Seminole Tribe Employee Friends and Family Museum Days flyer, created in-house by Virginia Yarce.

weekends we provided employees with more opportunities to visit and enjoy the Museum. This promotion was advertised to all employees via a Tribe-wide e-blast. Ultimately we hoped that employees in all departments would expand their knowledge and understanding of Seminole history and culture, in order to better serve the Tribe for whom they work. This promotion was highly successful. We took a hiatus during the Museum closure but reinstated the program for the American Indian Arts Celebration (AIAC) and saw a great turnout.

On-Site Programs and Events

During 2015, we shrank the size of our outreach section and focused most of our efforts on increasing our programs and offerings on our own campus. Our Outreach Specialist’s “Birds of Prey” demonstrations dazzled audiences of all ages. Hawks by the names of Ellen and Sable became some of the



Outreach Specialist Reinaldo Becerra at his Seminole weaponry exhibit at the American Indian Arts Celebration.

stars of the Museum. The Outreach Specialist also offered a Tools of War demonstration featuring Seminole weaponry on select days, and as a booth at AIAC. Numerous off-campus outreach presentations were still conducted despite the small number of available presenters.

Section staff lent a helping hand in planning, marketing, and staffing the Museum during our two highly successful receptions—Guy LaBree and the Indian Day re-opening event. Both of these events produced record attendance, particularly within the Seminole community itself.



Visitor Services Manager, Carrie Dille, and Tour Guide, Martina Dawson, working the Front of House together during the Indian Day Re-Opening Celebration.



Tour Guide Wilse Bruisedhead preparing for his Florida Cow-Whip demonstration during the Indian Day Re-Opening Celebration.

The American Indian Arts Celebration (AIAC)

The American Indian Arts Celebration is a highlight of every year at the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum. AIAC has taken place each year at the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki since the Museum opened in 1997. The Visitor Services and Development Section staff once again worked together and devoted a large portion of the year to planning the event. For a number of reasons, we believe the 2015 AIAC to be the best yet!

Visitation: The most obvious detail that set this year’s event apart from the rest was our overall visitation, which was up 29% from last year. This year we hosted a record number of school groups on Friday—the “education day”—of the event. A well-produced and properly timed e-blast promotion was distributed to countless schools and we were able to offer an added bonus for visitors this year that appealed greatly to the school groups—numerous docents provided additional information about the exhibits within the galleries. Most of our visitors came from surrounding areas but we also saw people from Canada, Italy, New York, Colombia, France, Germany, Connecticut, and Belgium. Not only did visitors enjoy the festival, most also took advantage of visiting the Museum galleries and boardwalk for the full Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki experience.

The Main Stage: We had six different performers or demonstrations on Friday and seven on Saturday. Tribal elder Bobby Henry provided the opening ceremony both days and engaged the audience with his traditional Seminole dances. Billy Walker and Paul Simmons awed guest with their alligator wrestling shows. The Warriors of AniKituhwa joined us from

Cherokee, NC and provided a riveting dance performance. Rita Youngman, Jerry Mincey, and Cypress Billie sang songs that told tales of Florida life. Saturday’s patchwork fashion show showed visitors a contemporary take on a traditional Seminole dress and the Martial Arts demonstration put a whole new spin on a traditional reenactment.

Other Offerings: In addition to visiting vendor booths and watching exciting performers, visitors could stop by the information booth for a food tasting featuring Seminole



Alligator wrestler, Paul Simmons, puts on a great show while Seminole alligator wrestler, Billie Walker, emcees in the background.

fry bread and sofkee. Saturday morning kicked off with a bird watching nature walk, where over 20 different species of birds were seen or heard. An outdoor exhibit installation featuring Seminole Spirit photographs, an archery station, a demonstration tent with three booths featuring Seminole weaponry, the Florida cow-whip, and Cherokee traditions, and a craft tent with three different (free) craft options rounded out the experience. Last but not least, we partnered with Billie Swamp Safari to offer free shuttle rides to take our visitors to their park, where visitors could receive 50% off any attraction just by showing their AIAC wristband.

Visitor Services and Development staff ended 2015 excited about what the future holds for our section and for the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum as a whole! **AQ**

How Do You Close A Museum For Six Weeks Without Missing A Beat? ASK THE FACILITIES DIVISION!

by Annette Snapp, Operations Manager

The Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum’s Facilities Division faced some major challenges in 2015 that everyone who works with aging facilities faces. The ceiling needed a new coat of paint and the carpeting really, really needed to be replaced. In order to do this, Facilities Manager Gene Davis calculated the amount of time required (6 weeks) for these updates and we made arrangements to bring in contractors and shut our doors for that amount of time. While we were closed to the public, we undertook other improvement projects throughout our campus. Many of these projects are summarized below and I think you will agree that much was accomplished!

Major Renovations:

For the Museum’s Facilities Division, there is easily one project that stood out in 2015 – major renovations of the Museum. For six weeks during the months of August and September, the Museum was closed in order to paint, update carpeting, and remove a wall in the Museum Store. While these were the major tasks, other activities were undertaken during this time to take advantage of the closure. The results clearly made the effort very worthwhile. And it required a herculean effort to prepare for this job!

Every single piece of art or historic object within the Museum was removed from the galleries in preparation for these intensive renovations. Additionally, some of the exhibit props were also removed while others were covered with plastic. The Collections team had their work cut out for them the first few days in making this happen! The largest painting in the Museum’s collection, by artist Noah Billie, is on display and required a team of about 10 people to safely move it from the wall and into a secure area. We used a forklift, two ladders, and a team that carefully choreographed every step of the process. Here is what the beginning of that process looked like. I think you would agree it that this was delicate and complicated!



Museum & Tribal Historic Preservation Office Team coordinates the careful temporary removal of a beautiful Noah Billie painting. Today it is back on the Museum wall for all to see!

The painting contractor then began the work of painting and staining the ceiling of the Museum – but only after cleaning and preparing those surfaces! This required the use of forklifts to raise the workers to the height of the ceiling. Would you feel comfortable working at those heights?



Contract workers scale the heights to clean and paint the Museum ceiling.

Also, new carpet was installed throughout much of the Museum to provide an updated look and replace the original carpet that had successfully served its tour of duty. The new

colors work extremely well with the Museum’s color palette while also bringing it into the 21st century. Because the type chosen is a commercial grade carpet, we expect that it can last for a good number of years.

The removal of a wall in the Museum Store was probably the most transformative piece of the renovations. Removing the wall, painting the walls a lighter color, and installing new carpet has made this space much lighter and more inviting. Of course preparing for this work required the removal of all merchandise and all furniture, including display cases, so that the space would be open for the fresh coat of paint, new carpet, and the wall removal. Over a single weekend, the wall was quickly demolished by Facilities Manager, Gene Davis. Once completed, his Maintenance Team assisted in creating a finished look to the new wall opening. See the Retail section of this annual report for the details on upgrades to the Museum Store and to see the final amazing results!

Village Improvements:

To develop a more inviting environment in the Village area, a “Welcome” sign was created and installed at the Village entrance. That way visitors on the boardwalk will know that



Come visit the village and take a selfie at the new sign!

the Village is a part of their Museum experience and that crafters welcome them to visit the chickees that are placed around the cook chickee. The back of the sign shares the word of thank you in the Miccosukee language: Sho Na Bish. The



New chickee constructed at the Cerimonial Area.

posts of this new sign have been painted with the Seminole colors which really set off the sign, links to Seminole culture, and helps to create a beautiful photo opportunity for our visitors!

Even more work has taken place in the village area. Nearby at the ceremonial grounds, a new chickee has been built as an area for programming. Nestled over the stadium-style bench seats is this brand new chickee. Come out and try it out for yourself!



Nicolas De Santiago completing the pressure-washing of the Museum boardwalk.

Additional Projects:

To ensure safety, the entire boardwalk was pressure-washed during the six-week Museum closure. This is a big job for one person, but our hat is off to longtime staffer Nicolas De Santiago who cleaned every inch of the over one-mile boardwalk ... and then some!

An aerator pump was added to the Museum’s pond to provide better water circulation. In operation from 9AM-4PM, this pump also adds a bubbly ambience to the Museum’s entranceway while improving the environment.



New aerator pump in the Museum pond.



Wildlife benefits from a healthier environment.

Because the Museum is located in a subtropical environment, much of the vegetation on campus grows quickly and needs almost constant attention. The six-week Museum closure gave the Maintenance Team a chance to trim back vegetation to create a more open and inviting pathway system for Museum visitors.



Trimming vegetation for a more welcoming walkway.



Wooden walkway redux.

Wooden boardwalks also need a lot of attention in this environment. The Maintenance Team tackled the short wooden walkways that provide access from the main Museum parking lot to the event area found adjacent to it. In this location, we hold the annual American Indian Arts Celebration (AIAC). Put it on your calendar for November 4 & 5, 2016 and try out our new and refurbished walkways!

Demonstration Garden Takes Root!



The Demonstration Garden is looking good enough to eat!

For over a year, the Facilities Division has worked hard to grow a garden in the Ceremonial Area at the Village. At the outset, the soil was not well-suited for crops, but over the past year, the Team has fortified the soil so that the traditional crops of corn, squash, and beans (known as “the three sisters”) is now flourishing.

This Demonstration Garden is a concept that has become increasingly popular as the crops grow. In particular, the crop of sunflowers in 2015 was hard to overlook. *AQ*



Sunflower in the Demonstration Garden. Photo courtesy of Ellen Batchelor.

Blazing a Trail to Bring History to the Future

By Tara Backhouse, Collections Manager

This was a groundbreaking year for the exhibits team. We mounted a total of 11 exhibits, both on our main campus and in the larger Tribal community. Highlights include the displays at the new administration building on the Brighton Reservation. Since Brighton is an hour away from the Museum, which is located on Big Cypress, it's not easy for people in the area to see our exhibits. Therefore we jumped at the chance to bring some of our exhibit designs to the Brighton Reservation permanently. Four display cases in the newest building on the Reservation now show pieces of Seminole culture and history with a local flavor. The



The cattle industry display at the Brighton Reservation Administration building brings a piece of Brighton's rural heritage into the office.

make the journey to Big Cypress to enjoy the main campus of our Museum. As the Museum serves all Seminole reservations and communities, we are proud to have made our mark in Brighton. We hope to have more opportunities like this in the future, both through permanent and traveling exhibits.

Back on Big Cypress, a retrospective exhibit honoring the artist Guy LaBree touched many people's hearts during the summer and early fall. Featuring many of his Seminole-themed paintings, an interview with the artist, and a recreation of his studio, the exhibit showed Guy's humble nature as well as his ability to capture the Seminole ethos.



Rows of Guy LaBree's vibrant paintings lead to a corner recreation of his studio, an unassuming easel in a comfortable home environment, with his remarkable paint palette alongside.

Having painted Seminole history and legends for decades, he was well known for incorporating Tribal voices in his work.

At the same time, It's Not a Costume: Modern Seminole Patchwork, brightened up the West Gallery from January to early December. A departure from the mid-20th century patchwork that visitors tend to see



Colorful skirts in a range of lengths and styles and even school spirit, in the maroon and gold FSU inspired dress on the left.

in other Florida museums, our exhibit showed the vibrant fluidity of Seminole patchwork over the last 45 years. As the decades passed, the artistry changed to match the march forward through time. One thing our Museum constantly does is strive to make every effort to challenge the stereotype that the Seminole Tribe is stuck in the past. Co-curated with Naples artist Jessica Osceola, this exhibit revealed Seminole patchwork to be a modern and resilient art form. The exhibit culminated in a contemporary patchwork fashion show, held at the 18th Annual American Indian Arts Festival (AIAC) in November. The first event of its kind, the show revealed whimsy and creativity among modern Seminole textile artisans. We hope to make this event bigger and better next

year. It is our hope that everyone who saw this exhibit or the fashion show now has a new appreciation for the modern patchwork that can be seen in Seminole communities throughout Florida.

Another pair of exhibits that coincided with this year's AIAC was the dual incarnation of Seminole Spirit, a photographic collection produced and loaned to us by Nomad Two Worlds, a New York-

COLLECTIONS



Our contemporary patchwork fashion show featured unique pieces such as a Hawaiian-style dress, a very sparkly jacket, and a mermaid costume.

based collaborative project between fashion photographer Russell James and many indigenous artists of the world. James' imagination was captured by the Seminole story of resilience and triumph. His admiration of the culture shone through in the individual portraits and ceremonial interpretations that were on display in two different ways. Three large prints on rice paper were strikingly displayed in the Museum on our Mosaic Art Wall, while a selection of portraits were on view at the first ever AIAC exhibit installation. We erected a sturdy tent and temporary walls near the stage, so that visitors could get a taste of the museum experience before making their way through the parking lot and across the street to enjoy the full gallery and boardwalk experience.



Printed on rice paper, these dramatic black and white photographs show the Everglades and the Seminole Tribe in an ethereal light.

The boardwalk experience got a facelift this year, with the completion of a three year grant funded project to design and install new interpretive signage along the mile long nature trail. Joining the original signs describing local plants, and the signs describing local animals that were added in 2014, we added 13 new signs that feature cultural information. From an introduction to the boardwalk, through the re-designed clan pavilion, to never-before interpreted areas like the Ceremonial Grounds and the Village, the new signs add a layer of education and contemplation to the already rich boardwalk journey.

We're happy to say that layers of interactivity were also added in the Museum galleries, where three new interactive elements were added to existing exhibits. In "From the Land", visitors can now use a set of palmetto fiber sifting baskets to try sifting

sand the way that Seminole sifted corn prior to the introduction of more modern food preparation equipment. In "In the Camp", people of all ages can enjoy taking a canoe journey to find the shortest route to the trading camp destination, or packing a bundle of essential items for a long trip. Adding elements like this enhances the visitor experience, and we hope to continue this trend with more interactive elements in the coming year.



Gloves and levered baskets allow visitors to safely and cleanly sift sand through a basket sifting set. The holes at the bottom of the basket on the top are much larger than the holes in the basket on the bottom. This enables sifters to target certain sizes of material, which would be necessary depending on each particular cooking project.

In the world of collection management, cataloging took center stage, as we responded to the incredible need for the preservation of the Tribe's history and the urgent requests for increased access to our historical materials. Of the 14,573 items cataloged by the division, the majority were photographs and newspapers produced by the Seminole Tribune, the Tribe's newspaper. The photographs were originally taken by Tribune reporters for possible inclusion in the newspaper. Taken at an untold number of Tribal events over the last 30 years, the



Choose what you think is essential to pack in this bundle for a long voyage. You can see how well you did by turning over the piece and recording the number on the back. Add all the numbers up at the end, and the highest score wins.

Seminole Tribune photographs present snapshots of the daily life, celebrations, and milestones of the current generations in the Seminole community. Perhaps their recent nature is the reason we have seen such a positive reaction to our efforts to catalog and identify the events, dates, and people in these photographs. From the youngest to the oldest, everyone seems to find friends and family as soon as they start perusing the collection. And we eagerly engage their help to collect information about these photographs. We also happily provide copies of any photos that are requested by our community interns, volunteers and visitors. Concurrently

we worked on cataloging our collection of Seminole Tribune newspapers, which date to the early 1980's. Over the impressive decades of publication, the Tribune has strived to record the changes that Florida and its Seminole people have seen. These two collections are tremendously important records of the Seminole Tribe's recent history.

Since the donation of approximately 30,000 Tribune photographs in 2014, the division's resources have been squarely aligned with preserving this collection. From



Collections Assistant Tennile Jackson surveys some of the 30,000 photographs transferred from the Seminole Tribune. She is in process of sorting and identifying the pictures.

sorting, grouping, and identifying, to cataloging and conservation, the photographs are taken through a multilevel process as they enter the collection. Collections staff and an army of volunteers and interns took on the majority of the duties. However the contribution of the Conservator could not be overlooked. One of the byproducts of decades of improper storage could be seen in rubber band residue that is now adhered to hundreds, if not thousands, of these photographs. The painstaking rubber band removal process performed on hundreds of photographs this year will most like be repeated by our Conservator next year. Luckily, Conservation is no stranger to detailed and meticulous tasks such as this. In 2015 we also embarked on a potentially dangerous conservation endeavor. You may or may not know that the Museum



Volunteer Heather Billie works on the next part of the process, numbering and scanning the Tribune photographs, in preparation for adding them to our database

has a collection of 40 historic firearms that date from the early to late 1800s. These pieces are representative of the types of arms used during the 19th century Seminole War period. You also may not have thought about the danger such objects pose to staff and visitors if they are not properly taken care of. Gunpowder residue, even a small amount, is flammable, and it's important to make sure that historic firearms do not contain any lingering powder. As the examination of



Mary Beth Rosebrough, Research Coordinator, catalogs some of our older (1980's) Seminole Tribune newspapers. Adding descriptive information to the catalog records helps us to fulfill information requests from the community.

historic firearms is a specialized skill, and because it is not one that most conservators learn during their academic career, our Conservator obtained special training in Firearms Conservation to complete this project. Luckily, after all weapons were assessed, we can safely say we are gunpowder-free. Safety is always a primary concern for us, whether it is the safety of people or objects, and this year we began to think of object safety in a new way. We are pretty used to worrying about a piece of art, a patchwork skirt, or a photograph. Those objects have to be treated in stored in a special way in order to preserve them. It turns out the same thing is true for digital objects. A digital object could be a photograph taken with a digital camera, or a video recorded in digital form, instead of on a tape or DVD. And computer files are also digital objects. As you can imagine, more and more digital objects are created every year, and digital formats are becoming an increasingly important way to record history. We have been learning that digital objects face a whole different set of dangers than do physical objects, and that they are at great risk of damage and loss because of changing technology and the inherent vice of digital storage devices. This is a problem that the museum profession is slowly tackling, and we took a first stab at it last year. With the completion of a report on archival standards for digital born materials, we now have a roadmap to begin adjusting our policies and procedures with regard to our digital objects. It won't be too long before our cataloging totals include digital files like jpegs and audio files. Tune in next year to see what we implement to safeguard these fragile pieces of history!



The Museum's historic firearm collection represents many types of guns that the U.S. military used during the 19th century to fight the Seminole people.

Staff

Paul Backhouse, *Director*
 Tara Backhouse, *Collections Manager*
 Ann Barrett, *Assistant Retail Manager*
 Ellen Batchelor, *Head of Security*
 Linda Beletso, *Village Crafter*
 Reinaldo Becerra, *Outreach Specialist*
 George Billie, *Village Crafter*
 Patsy Billie, *Village Crafter*
 Alyssa Boge, *Education Coordinator*
 Kenneth Bowers III, *Security Officer*
 Sally Buster, *Village Crafter*
 Fermin Carranza, *Maintenance Technician*
 Oscar Carrasquillo Rivera, *Maintenance Shift Supervisor*
 Rebecca Crum, *Office Manager*
 Natasha Cuervo, *Registrar*
 Lena Cypress, *Village Crafter*
 Martina Dawson, *Tour Guide*
 Gene Davis, *Former Facilities Manager*
 Maria De Santiago, *Maintenance Technician*
 Nicolas De Santiago, *Maintenance Technician*
 Carrie Dilley, *Visitor Services and Development Manager*

Charles Dunkley, *Security Officer*
 Rebecca Fell, *Curator of Exhibits*
 Linda Frank, *Village Crafter*
 Iris Garcia, *Sales Clerk*
 Marlene Gray, *Conservator*
 Eric Griffis, *Oral History Coordinator*
 Jeremiah Hall, *Village Crafter*
 Tennile Jackson, *Collections Assistant*
 Jennie Martinez, *Village Crafter*
 Siobhan Millar, *Exhibits Coordinator*
 Joy Murphy, *Former Education Coordinator*
 Wilsie Omeasoo-Bruised Head, *Tour Guide*
 Rebecca Petrie, *Retail Manager*
 Nora Pinell-Hernandez, *Exhibits Fabricator*
 Lorraine Posada, *Village Crafter*
 James Powell, *Former Registrar*
 Mary Beth Rosebrough, *Research Coordinator*
 Vandall Samuels, *Former Tour Guide*
 Annette Snapp, *Operations Manager*
 Earlene Osceola, *Village Crafter*
 Virginia Yarce, *Development Assistant*
 Pedro Zepeda, *Village Crafter*

Volunteers and Interns

Chelsey Alvarado, *Intern*
 Darryl Billie, *Volunteer*
 Heather Billie, *Volunteer*
 Brittany Cox, *Intern*
 Stephanie Erichsen, *Intern*
 Stephanie Johnson, *Volunteer*
 Larry Landry, *Volunteer*
 Melanie Lopez, *Volunteer*
 Noemi McDonald, *Volunteer*
 Silas Pacheco, *Volunteer*
 Jane Richardson, *Volunteer*
 Odile Saint-Flour, *Volunteer*
 Roger Sierra, *Intern*
 Hannah Spence, *Volunteer*

Work Experience Program

Quenton Cypress – *Museum Trainee*
 Lauren Posada – *Summer Work Experience Program Participant*
 Lyndsey Posada – *Summer Work Experience Program Participant*



In loving memory of our dear friend and longtime colleague, George Billie.

NEW

Thank you to the following individuals who have joined or renewed their Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki membership. Your support of the Museum is greatly appreciated!

BASIC MEMBERSHIPS

Tribal Member

Heather Billie
 Ted Billie
 Elrod Bowers
 Rosavell Billie Ortega

Family Clan

Melinda Cabral
 Valerie Hauser
 Maggie Moening
 Terri Moorhouse
 David Mott
 Connie Rozycki
 Rachel Solano
 Eric Speakman

Individual

Mathi Mugilan Paguth Arivalan
 Eleana Moriarty
 Stephen Levitt



Interested in learning how you can help support the Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum in its effort to collect, protect, preserve and interpret vital Seminole and Florida history?

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Ask about our Volunteer and Internship Programs.

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