

Creek Indian Enterprises Development Authority



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Securing the Tribe's legacy

Looking back on the history of the Poarch Band of Creek Indians, many will appreciate what a long, hard road the Tribe has traveled to become who they are today.

This is the second installment in a series about the history of Creek Indian Enterprises Development Authority (CIEDA).

Leadership forges prosperity

Eddie Tullis was the first chairman of the Board of Directors at CIEDA and was the first president when it was born under Tribal government. He continued as president for a short time when CIEDA was spun off into its own organization.

"I'm a big supporter of diversification," Tullis said. "I'm a big supporter of getting out and competing in the real world so our people understand what happened here at Poarch Creek with our ancestors."

He said CIEDA's success is a result of having the best people possible to operate the organization and each enterprise to accomplish the end goal: to provide revenue streams for the Tribal people.

"We here at Poarch Creek have done an outstanding job in understanding the complexity of the organization (CIEDA). Economic development is something you have to work at for it to succeed," Tullis said.

Taking the reins after Tullis was Robert McGhee, who is now Tribal Council Vice Chair. Current CIEDA President and CEO James T. Martin served as Tribal Administrator under Tribal government when the company was created. He then went to work with United South and Eastern Tribes and later came to be the head of CIEDA.

Martin has excelled at bringing CIEDA to self-sufficiency and is spearheading the entertainment project in Foley.

"It's exciting to see the progression of things for our people," Martin said. "To see where we were a few decades ago to where we are now is amazing. And it says a lot about who we are as a Tribe and as individuals in the community."

Education is key

Tullis emphasized the importance of education for Tribal members as another reason CIEDA strived to be a success.

"We started long ago in stressing education for our people,"



By Jen Peake | CIEDA Marketing Specialist

he said. "Back then, we had very few people who were able to get an education, but today (in recent years), we send all our young people to college and they are beginning to come home and utilize those skills and knowledge to help their own and set up future generations with hope and prosperity. However, you have to be able to provide them with a job when they come back, and that's where CIEDA comes into play."

Martin reiterated Tullis' remarks by saying the more diverse the Tribe is in business, the more Tribal members will want to be a part of making the Tribe successful.

"You have to create a path for education then you have to create the opportunities for those who gain knowledge to put their skills to good use and give back to the communities they live in," Martin said.

The Tribe recently has funded a scholarship for students in Alabama and the Florida Panhandle. The \$1 million fund ensures that two scholarships will be awarded each year to one male and one female residing in Alabama or the Panhandle. Selected students are expected to receive up to \$6,000 each.

"Being able to help change someone's quality of life, and in turn raise the profile of a community, makes the education component incredibly important to the tribe," Tribal Chair Stephanie Bryan said. "It's important that we look out for the now but really what we as leaders are doing is for the next seven generations," she said.

Look for the third part in this series next month.