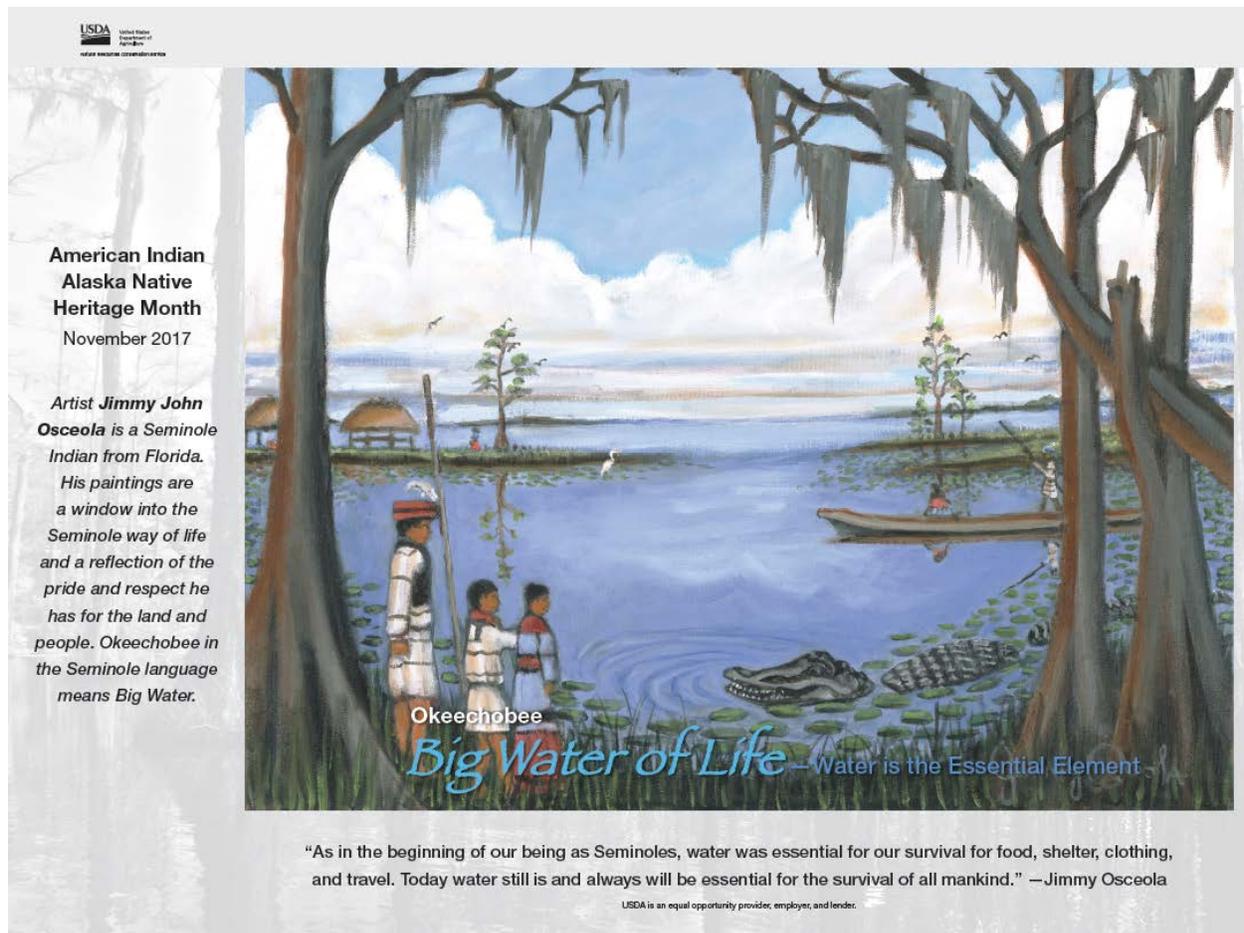


Okeechobee-Big Water of Life-Water is the Essential Element

American Indian Alaska Native Heritage Month Poster- November 2017

Jay Doronila-PIA-AIAN SEPM



“**Big Water of Life-Water is the essential element**” is the Title and Theme for the American Indian/Alaska Native (AIAN) Heritage Month Poster. The theme and title reflects the tribal perspective on the importance of Water and how the Seminole culture in the past and in the present identifies with water.

The poster was created through the efforts of Florida NRCS poster committee led by Katy Greene the Florida AIAN Special Emphasis Program Manager (SEPM), Renee Bodine Florida Public Affairs Specialist, State AIAN SEPMS, and Deborah Clairmont the National AIAN SEPM. Initial voting was performed by the Florida Poster Committee, with final selections made through voting of the State and National AIAN SEPMS.

Each year, NRCS supports and reaches out to Tribes and Native Americans within the state by creating the **American Indian/Alaska Native Heritage Month Poster** for November to celebrate and recognize

American Indian and Alaska Native culture and diversity. NRCS opens the door for all states and tribes to participate, with this year being Florida's first time in creating a poster. This outreach effort reflects AIAN cultural values in how tribes connect with the land and their resources.

The Tribal Artist and artwork for the poster contest was advertised through press releases as well as fliers distributed throughout Florida by NRCS employees and poster committee members. Through longstanding partnerships and new connections made with tribal communities, fliers were distributed to the Florida tribes as well as to individuals throughout the state. Articles were posted both before and during the contest to the Seminole Tribune. Eight Paintings were submitted and went through the voting process which evaluated creativity, originality, artistry and skill.

The winning artist selected, Jimmy Osceola, is a member of the Seminole Tribe. His paintings are a window into the Seminole way of life and a reflection of the pride and respect he has for the land and people. In the Seminole Language 'Okeechobee' means Big Water. "As in the beginning of our being as Seminoles, water was essential for our survival for food, shelter, clothing, travel. Today, water still and always will be essential for the survival of all mankind" Jimmy Osceola

The American Indian Alaska Native Heritage Month Poster will be printed and distributed to State offices and other locations around late October 2017. A limited number of additional copies will be available through the NRCS Distribution Center for Publications."

Deborah Clairmont, National AIAN SEPM, Illinois

Katy Greene, AIAN SEPM Florida