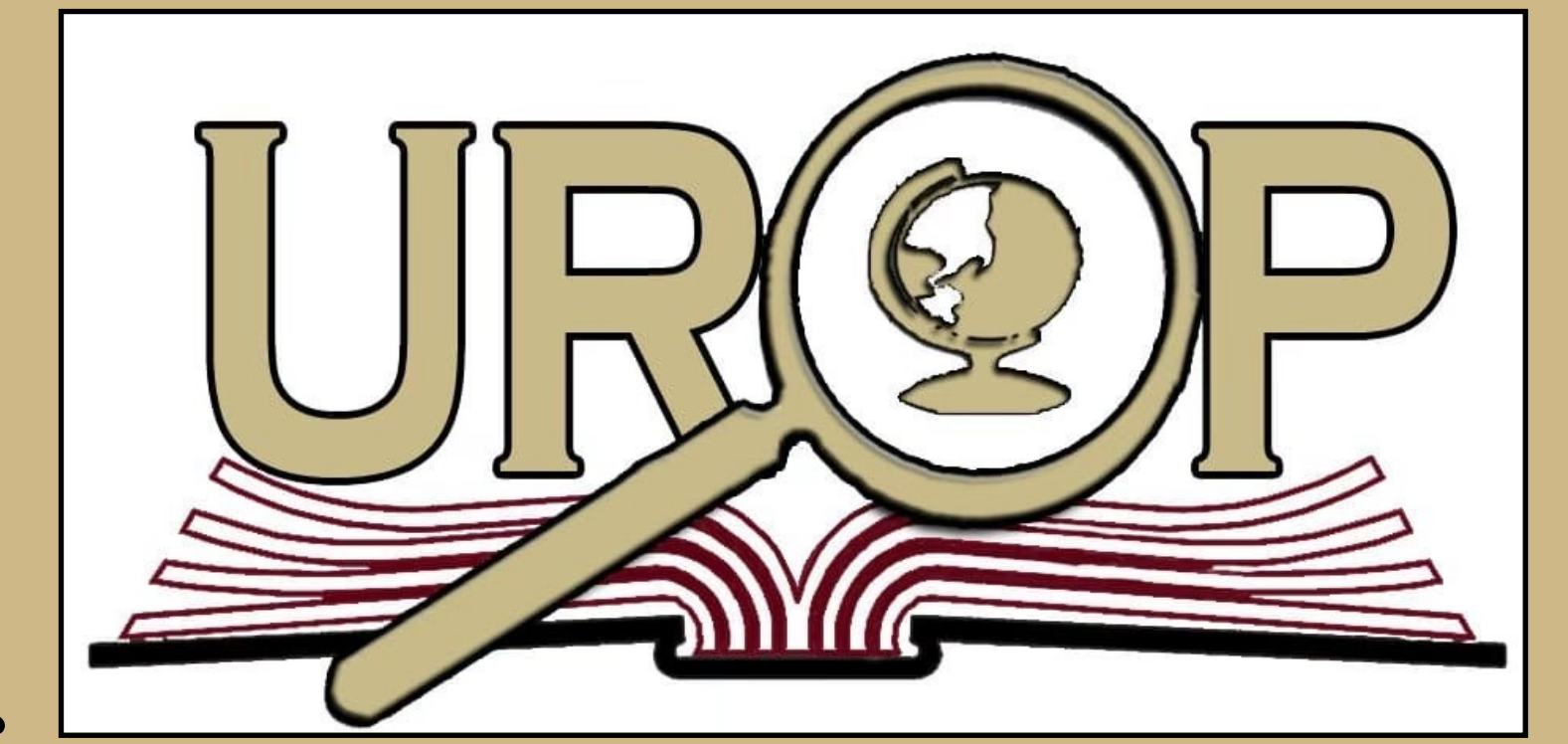


# Legacy in Motion: Exploring the Bond between Miss Florida



## Seminole and FSU Homecoming

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### Introduction

The Miss Florida Seminole Pageant has existed since the 1940s. It started as a way for the Seminole Tribe to elect a young woman as a representative to be active in state and federal government. It soon transformed into a pageant-style competition for young women and young girls, with the addition of Miss Junior Florida Seminole. The winners of the Miss Florida Seminole Pageant have gone on to be very active in their tribes and councils. It is known that every year during the Florida State University Homecoming Football Game the Miss Seminole Winner of that year makes an appearance with her family. However, it is unknown when this started and the influence this had on FSU's Homecoming events, wardrobe, and other culturally involved events. This research is meant to highlight the gaps in the history between FSU and the Seminole Tribe of Florida.

### Abstract

This research examines the special origins and history of the relationship between Florida State University (FSU) and the Seminole Tribe of Florida, with a specific focus on how the Miss Florida Seminole Pageant was included in the university's homecoming celebrations. This tradition, which dates back many years to the Seminole Tribe, has developed into the most enduring bond between the Tribe and the University. Through the examination of tribal media like *The Seminole Tribune*, online newspaper databases, FSU Flambeau, and archival papers housed in the FSU archives, researchers hope to learn more about the historical significance of this cultural exchange. To shed light on the untold stories of Seminole women and their families, researchers are closely studying photos, letters, and documents related to Miss Florida Seminole's participation in FSU's homecoming. The purpose of this project is to improve our understanding of the special relationship that exists between the Seminole Tribe and Florida State University. It will also offer important insights into the cultural, social, and historical consequences of this relationship. The goal is to create a consistent story that will be studied for many decades by carefully going through tribal newspapers and other historical documents. This strategy will highlight the historical development of the Miss Florida Seminole legacy and emphasize the value of cross-cultural collaboration in creating a mutual understanding. Our research seeks to close historical gaps, support cultural preservation efforts, and highlight the longstanding connection between Florida State University and the Seminole Tribe of Florida.

### Methods

- We extensively examined the primary sources to better understand how the winner of the Miss Florida Seminole Pageant was incorporated into Florida State University's (FSU) homecoming activities. We thoroughly analyzed a range of archival artifacts and publications, including local tribe newspapers like *The Seminole Tribune*, online newspaper databases, FSU yearbooks, *The Flambeau*, and historical records from the university's archives.
- We researched the long history of the tradition by carefully looking through the established sources, with an emphasis on major events such as FSU homecoming ceremonies through analyzing newspapers, primary source documents and websites associated with our research.
- This research involved a thorough investigation of archives, collaboration, and historical analysis to look into the unique relationship between the Seminole Tribe of Florida and Florida State University. The study focused on the contributions of Seminole women and their families to this long-standing tradition.

### Visuals

Figure 1.



Figure 1. An excerpt from *VIRES* Magazine Fall 2023 edition in which they detail the tradition of Miss Florida Seminole and her appearance at FSU Homecoming

Figure 2.



Figure 2. The front cover of the *Florida Flambeau* November 15, 1976

### Results

We discovered important events, such as the first involvement of a Miss Florida Seminole in 1957, involving Connie Gowen becoming the very first Miss Seminole. An important discovery from our research was the symbolic reappearance of Connie Gowen at FSU in October 2021, signifying a significant time in the lasting cultural interchange between the Seminole Tribe and the institution. This event highlighted the ongoing importance of the Miss Florida Seminole Pageant in promoting cultural linkages and historical bonds across communities. This unique and invaluable relationship began in the 1970s, as we discovered. Through our research we also discovered the first time that Miss Florida Seminole walked the field with the court and crowned the Chief and Princess at Homecoming in 1976. Gloria Wilson was Miss Florida Seminole 1976, and was a part of this significant event which would become such a beloved tradition we know today. This was followed by the change that year to create the Homecoming Chief and Princess tradition, which was inspired by guidance from the Seminole Tribe of Florida. Then later on in the decade, in 1978, the induction of The Renegade Program began, after it was originally proposed in 1962.

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