

THE MANY FIRSTS OF BETTY MAE TIGER JUMPER

In 1967 Betty Mae Tiger Jumper (Snake Clan) became the first woman elected to be the chairperson of the Seminole Tribe of Florida. However this was only one of the many firsts that she accomplished throughout her long life.

Betty Mae was the first Florida Seminole to graduate high school, but she had to fight to attend it at all. At that time, in segregated Florida, education was denied to Indigenous people. Not giving up, she would leave the state in order to attend a school. Betty Mae later became the first Seminole to complete her higher education, as well as the first Seminole Nurse as she received her degree, following a lifelong passion to help her Tribe.

When the federal policy of Indian Termination threatened Tribal sovereignty, she served on the Seminole constitutional committee, helping to gain federal recognition for the Seminole Tribe of Florida. While serving as Chairwoman of the Tribe, she founded the United South and Eastern Tribes (USET), and was appointed to the National Congress on Indian Opportunity by the American President.

After leaving office she founded the *Alligator News*, a newspaper that would later become the *Seminole Tribune*. Her work there earned her the very first Lifetime Achievement Award given by the Native American Journalists Association. She would go on to publish three books, narrate Seminole stories for posterity, and be awarded an honorary Doctorate from Florida State University. Throughout her life, against every obstacle, Betty Mae stood strong and persisted.



Above: Betty Mae (Right) and Mary Parker (left) before leaving for school in North Carolina, 1939.



Right: Betty Mae earned her Nursing credentials at Kiowa Indian Hospital in Oklahoma, 1946

Below: Joe Dan Osceola and Betty Mae hold up a prototype of the Seminole Tribe of Florida flag, 1957.



For more on the life of Betty Mae Tiger Jumper, check out her memoirs – *A Seminole Legend*. If you want to learn more about Seminole History, visit the STOF Tribal Historic Preservation Office website at: www.stofthpo.com

