

# THE BIG MAN OF THE CATTLE PROGRAM: MORGAN SMITH



The first thing most people noticed about Morgan Smith (Bird Clan) was his size. According to Billy Bowlegs III, Morgan Smith was the largest Seminole alive, and one reporter referred to him as “a gargantuan man,” standing around six and a half feet tall and “weighing as much as the horse he rode.”

Morgan Smith was there for the first transfer of government owned cattle to Seminole Tribal ownership as one of heads of the Seminole cattle program. A career cattleworker, he worked with the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) to transfer the cattle from federal ownership to the Seminole, not as a gift, but as a loan that would be paid back by an increasingly successful business. He was elected the Chairman of the Cattle Board, and was instrumental in the development of the program on the Big Cypress Reservation.

He made his main home near the Big Cypress Red Barn, the center of the cattle program and most activity on the reservation, but later established another camp near the Kissimmee Billie Slough, to watch over his herd. In an unprecedented move, he bought a pre-made home from a catalogue and had it shipped out to the reservation and then brought out into the slough, the first non-traditional home in Big Cypress.

Morgan Smith was a forward thinker, and helped bring veterinary science, new ranching techniques, and business sense to the newly rebuilt Seminole cattle program. Today the cattle offices in Big Cypress are named after him. His hard work ensured the future of both the program, and the Seminole Tribe of Florida.

## TO LEARN MORE

Cowkeeper's Legacy, the second Seminole Story Book, covers the history of the Seminole cattle tradition, from Ancestral times to the modern day. It is coming soon and will be available both in physical format and on the [STOFTHPO.com](http://STOFTHPO.com) website.

Visit the Tribal Historic Preservation Office website at [stofthpo.com](http://stofthpo.com) or use the QR code For more Seminole history resources.

