

# The Natchitoches Times

THURSDAY EDITION

\$1.00

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14A | Thursday Edition, July 27, 2023  
THE NATCHITOCHESTIMES



Aurora Grace Bellow, granddaughter of Chief Rodger Collum, is guarding her Pawpaw's watermelons. Collum shared two farm trailers full of watermelons with Butte Tribe members and surrounding communities.



Butte Gardens produced square watermelons this season. Chief Collum was curious about the procedure, tried it out, and the results are seen above. For Butte Tribe members, when the chief decides to do something, he does it right.

## The bounty at Butte Gardens shared with communities

Courtesy story and photos by Belinda Brooks

Chief Rodger Collum has had another successful year with his crops in Butte Gardens. The gardens of Butte Tribe have been planted and shared with the community for generations upon generations. Collum, like his ancestors, was raised as a Native American seed keeper and to plant by the indigenous process of the "Three Sisters."

For Native Americans, seed-saving was essential to keep seed lines along with tribal traditions alive. Tribal heirloom seeds were passed down to Collum by his grandparents, Chief Clarence, and Louella Waters

Desadier. The Desadier family has always cultivated connections to their ancestors while choosing crops that could stand against the shifting bayou weather patterns and rising temperatures.

This year's Butte Garden's crops included okra, squash, cucumbers, peppers, tomatoes, and eggplant. The summer garden has ended with abundant gigantic, sweet cantaloupes and watermelons. Collum decided to harvest the last of the crops this week. He loaded two farm trailers with hundreds of watermelons.

On social media, Collum invited the tribe and those throughout the surrounding communities to enjoy the fruits of his labor at

Butte Gardens free of charge.

Butte Tribe's vision for future generations is clearly stated:

\* Teach planting and harvesting by the moon cycle.

\* Reveal ancient knowledge of natural seeds, remedies, and medicinal properties.

\* Instill knowledge passed down by the elders.

\* Respect and care for our elders; by doing so, learning to respect ourselves as an essential part of the universe.

\* To ensure that honorable leaders, teachers, and protectors arise from the mist of our tribe to lead and guide in ways of our elders by being the action, legacy, and voice



Butte Tribe Council Chief Tammy Perot traveled from Winnfield with friend Mary Jane Cockerham to collect Butte Garden vegetables and cantaloupe. Visitors expressed surprise at the size of Chief Collum's cantaloupe, and even more surprised at how sweet they were.

of our past, present, and future.

Our vision is to preserve our heritage, educate future generations,

and honor our ancestors by continuing the Butte Tribe culture and traditions for many generations.

Go to [buttribe.org](http://buttribe.org) to read more about Butte Tribe's history and current tribal and community projects.