



**MASSACHUSETTS CENTER FOR
NATIVE AMERICAN AWARENESS, INC.**

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MCNAA TurtleTalk: January–March 2022

WHAT WE'VE BEEN DOING AT MCNAA

MCNAA BOARD MEETINGS

by Board Member Burne Stanley-Peters



The MCNAA Board of Directors met virtually on Wednesday, January 26, 2022. Zoom was operated by Board Member Claudia Fox Tree and the meeting was chaired by yours truly. Board Members spent the first hour and a half updating census information and other statistics in the 5-year Strategic Plan. One more meeting should finalize all the information (and we will, of course, update blocks of information that might change as the years go on.) As with the last meeting, Claudia and Dawn did a great job facilitating the exercise.

Other topics that were discussed included:

- A recap on the success of our last book discussion held on Monday, January 24, 2022
- The date and book title for the next book discussion and thoughts on a Special Guest Speaker for that event (April 4, 2022 – The Sentence)

- An update us on the number of attendees for the upcoming craft-making afternoon on March 13, 2022.
- An update on the progress with lining up available Native educators for interviews with our students through our Scholarship & Educational Resources Program
- Thoughts on our 2022 events. We will access month to month.
- Info on a savings program for youth with Mass. Education and Finance Agency. More details will be shared with us soon.

The Board met again on February 21, 2022. Topics that were discussed included:

- An update on the upcoming crafting afternoon scheduled for March 13th. We had an overwhelming response to the virtual event and for pouch kits so a few minor adjustments needed to be made. All is good. It's going to be a great experience for the children/youth making leather pouches.
- Details about the recent heating assistance grant we received from the AG's office. The funds will be added to existing funds that were raised during our year-end appeal. This grant gives us additional revenue to continue helping Native families and Elders with their heating bills. It was pointed out that while this grant is helpful to Native families and elders who need assistance with heating cost this winter season, the grant does not help with our other program needs such as: scholarships for our students; food for elders and families; social change events and youth activities so donations are still needed from our supporters.
- The rest of the meeting was devoted to finalizing the last details to our 5-year strategic plan.

These were very productive meetings with a great Team. . We will meet again soon. ■

E-MAIL ALERT!

Around March 15th, our e-mail account was hacked. If you received an e-mail from mcnaa@aol.com with an attachment, I'm sure you have deleted it by now. We just wanted you to know that the message did not come from Burne or MCNAA. Apologies for the inconvenience this might have caused. ■



WHAT'S HAPPENING AT THE OFFICE!

by Board Member Burne Stanley-Peters

The MCNAA office is still officially closed to the public but we are still maintaining a physical presence by having a couple board members cover the office a few days a week. We are also meeting visitors outside who come by to pick up items they purchased or to drop off memberships or monetary donations. Face masks are still worn for these short visits.



Despite the lack of planning live events like our auction, dances, anniversary celebration, and pow-wows, our days are filled with other important work that keeps all of us very busy. Over the last three months, we:

- * Assisted many needy Native families and Elders by mailing them food gift cards, and paying their utility bills.
- * Worked on a program outline for the new services that were added to our Scholarship & Educational Resources Program that was expanded last year.
- * Responded to many requests from organizations and civic groups for speakers, guidance, & information.
- * Packaged and mailed items that were purchased from the online fundraising web page.
- * Worked on routine tasks –bookkeeping, donation receipt letters, membership renewals, attended informational and training webinars, responded to

general e-mail inquiries, updated our web site and social media pages, etc. ■

MCNAA BOOK DISCUSSION OF “FIREKEEPER’S DAUGHTER”

by Erin McCormack, MCNAA Advisory Council Member

On Monday, January 24, 2022, MCNAA hosted a virtual discussion on “Firekeeper’s Daughter” by Angeline Boulley (Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians) with special guest, Eva Blake (Assonet Wampanoag), who spoke on the importance and continuation of Native traditions.

Participants responded very favorably to the young adult novel and appreciated the zoom event, which they might not have been able to attend otherwise. Many were grateful to have Eva share thoughts about how traditions like language use, wampum making and sweat lodges are handed down, sometimes influenced by gender roles. This was the 4th virtual talk on

Indigenous books, during the second season of Covid-19, which has become a new offering for MCNAA members to take part in during winter months, the time for storytelling.

The discussions, so far, have been organized and moderated by MCNAA Board member Claudia Fox Tree, Advisory Council member Erin McCormack, with technical assistance from MCNAA member Xóchi Kountz.



The format includes introductory comments on the book, updates on MCNAA programs, a list of resources related to the book, and time for “break out rooms” in which participants gather in small groups to share a favorite quote or idea from the book. Simple protocols to promote equitable discussion are presented and also put into the Chat. The events have also featured “surprise” guest speakers, the author or someone connected to the themes of the book.

Currently, there are a lot of new books by Indigenous authors to choose from, fiction and non-fiction, including some like “Braiding Sweetgrass” by Robin Wall Kimmerer and “Firekeepers Daughter” which have been on bestseller lists. The field is expanding rapidly, with Native-authored books on women, coming of age, LGBTQ, science fiction/fantasy and mystery stories. “Firekeepers Daughter” was chosen as an exciting, engaging “thriller” set in upper Michigan with a unique, bi-racial young main character, Daunis Fontaine. The story is as much about forging a powerful new identity as solving a mystery.

For our next discussion, “The Sentence” by Louise Erdrich (Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians), is also a newly published book by a well-known, prolific author who has tackled many important Native issues in a variety of genres. The discussion will be held on Monday, April 4, 2022 at 5 pm. Members with suggestions for future discussions are encouraged to get in touch with MCNAA. ■

"Privilege does not have to be negative, but we have to share our resources and take direction about how to use our privilege in ways that empower those who lack it." - Bell Hooks.

KIDS, CRAFTS AND CONVERSATION – MEDICINE POUCHES ONLINE WITH MASS CENTER FOR NATIVE AMERICAN AWARENESS

by Erin McCormack, MCNAA Advisory Council Member

For its first online crafting program on Sunday, March 13, 2022, Claudia Fox Tree led a circle of over forty-five members and friends of the Mass. Center for Native American Awareness (MCNAA). With an overwhelming response, only 50 of over 1,100 requested kits of leather and cords were mailed out in advance, with others invited to find their own materials and follow the pattern provided in an email. Many of the young people, already comfortable with Zoom, were able to follow on their own, while others had adult assistance. The program began with a tribal land acknowledgement, asking crafters to put in the chat box where they were located, if they knew.

Before starting the demonstration, Claudia spoke about the meaning and history of medicine pouches, emphasizing that not all tribal nations used them or made them in the same ways. She talked about the idea of medicine as “good feelings” that we carry, both in our minds like people and places, or concrete objects with special importance to us. Claudia emphasized that it is necessary to create and use the medicine with good intention, for example, smudging beforehand. Although medicine pouches are an ancient tradition, she reminded us that traditions change over time, and can be adapted to current materials and conditions.

As the crafting demonstration was underway, I spoke about the Medicine Wheel, a set of teachings in some tribal nations, symbolized by a circle divided into four quadrants, often colored red, yellow, white and black, representing the 4 directions, 4 seasons of the year, different plants and animals. Each quadrant offers lessons in living a balanced life, and how humans can learn from animals how to adapt to changes, and the need to respect them as teachers. Part of crafting medicine pouches is to thank the creatures whose lives provided the leather and fur to work with, so they are honored and not wasted.



From the donated leather, the pattern for the pouches was designed and cut out by Claudia and MCNAA member, Xóchi Kountz, who also punched the holes for weaving. Some kits contained pieces of donated fur, while others suggested finding or using fur or other materials to personalize each pouch. With the aid of an “arm” to hold her camera phone, and a Visualizer program on the computer, Claudia was able to show clearly with her hands how to begin and continue the weaving, identifying the sides of the leather, and to draw the strings and form the pouch. When asked what things participants might put in their pouches, they mentioned rocks, plants, marbles, feathers, food stuffs, teeth and pills!

The program was so well received, MCNAA realized there is interest in doing more like this, which can be very successful even if we’re not able to offer them in person, or for including participants who may be farther away. When asked to show their pouches, the children looked very happy with what they had created.

Adult participants emailed afterwards. Some of the comments included:

“I would love to see homeschool events and days, and maybe some older kids 10+ hands on crafts and lectures. I homeschool my two girls and love sharing these types of experiences with them.”

“We live in NH so were excited when we saw something so engaging and cool for young people who are not on the rez.”

“I did not get a kit but participated and loved the class. I made 2 bags with materials I had at home. Having the pattern and your instruction was more than sufficient. The education about medicine was even more valuable. Thank you so much.”

All of us at MCNAA agree that this workshop was a great learning experience for all. We were all inspired by the positive energy in the room and felt the good medicine exhibited by all. ■



OTHER NEWS AND INFORMATION

WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH SPEAKER'S SERIES.

On Thursday, March 17, 2022, Claudia Fox Tree (MCNAA Board Member) spoke at the Danvers Human Rights and Inclusion Committee for Women's History Month. She brought some books off her shelves to the television station and during the program talked



about history, stereotypes, contributions, Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA), the bills in the statehouse, and so much more! She answered a lot of tough but thoughtful questions from the audience. At the end of the program, Dr. Dutrochet Djoko, Chairman of the Human Rights Committee, presented Claudia with a Proclamation from the Massachusetts House of Representatives. ■

MCNAA A COMMUNITY PARTNER WITH THE 2022 SALEM FILM FEST

Mass. Center for Native American Awareness was a proud community partner with Salem Film Fest 2022, a festival of international documentary films supported by local sponsors.

It took place in-person on Thursday, March 24 through Sunday, March 27, 2022, followed by virtual programming Monday, March 28 through Sunday, April 3, 2022. Film screenings and hosted events were held at CinemaSalem, the Cabot Theatre, the Peabody Essex Museum, and other locations.



MCNAA was able to help the Salem Film Fest build their audience and make local connections for their audiences to be able to become aware of the events taking place over the course of the Film Fest. ■

"The Environment is no one's property to destroy; it's everyone's responsibility to protect." – Mohith Agadi

CELEBRATE EARTH DAY BY APPRECIATING AND RESPECTING THE NATURAL WORLD. HERE ARE SOME IDEAS TO INSPIRE YOU THIS YEAR.

10 EARTH DAY ACTIVITIES AND IDEAS

1. Support Our Pollinators! Bring native bees and other pollinating creatures to your garden. One way to do this is by selecting the right plants.

2. Clean Up Plastic in Your Neighborhood or Local Park. One of the best ways to connect with the Earth is through cleanups! Go on a walk with a trash bag and help to clean up any plastic that you find.

3. Swap Out Your Kitchen and Household Products! Think 100% recycled aluminum foil, chemical-free parchment paper for baking, compostable bags made with potato starch, and even vegetable-based inks for their packaging.



4. Plant A Tree. We love our trees! They capture carbon, cool overheated places, benefit agriculture, support pollinators, reduce the risk of disease transmission, and boost local economies. Talk to your local government about planting more trees and native garden beds in public spaces or consider planting your own on your property!

5. Use Wildflowers and Native Plants. Wildflowers and indigenous species are not only beautiful but also attract native and beneficial insects that improve both pest control and pollination—meaning bigger flowers and bigger harvests.

6. Reduce, Reuse, Recycle in the Garden. Caring about yourself and nature means being less wasteful and saving money, too. Who could argue with this? If you are a gardener, buy in bulk when you know that you'll need a lot of topsoil, mulch, compost, or other materials. Reuse, recycle, or return old plastic pots and trays. Plant pots right into the ground!

7. Stop Pesticides and Chemicals in the Garden. Most of the beginner gardeners whom we meet want to start growing without chemicals or pesticides—in a way that works and even saves money. Much of this is simply about focusing less on the plant and more on the health of the soil that supports the plant. If it's nutrient-rich with organic matter, plants thrive.

8. Conserve Water! Avoid overwatering your plants and improve their health by knowing how much your garden really needs. Avoid watering your garden vegetables and plants from overhead, which invites fungal disease. Water at the soil level.

9. Think About Your Diet. About one-third of the food that we produce every year goes to waste annually! Usually, this happens after we buy the food. How do we avoid waste in our own lives (and save money)? Also, how can we improve our diet so that it's healthier for ourselves (and the planet)? One way is to care about your "foodprint," which is the result of everything that it takes to get your food from the farm to your plate.

10. Get Kids Involved! Pass down a love of nature and plants to kids. There are lots of opportunities for hands-on learning experiences outside. ■

JOIN MCNAA'S MONTHLY GIVING CIRCLE

BECOME A MONTHLY DONOR

We received a small grant to help Native families and elders with heating costs this winter season but the grant does not help with other program needs such as: scholarships for students; food for elders and families; social change events; and youth activities. Monthly donations are a sure way to help with that.....for our organization to receive recurring funds on a regular basis to help more families and/or to put towards some of our other important initiatives.



In the spirit of "giving-back", we invite you as well as large, medium, and small businesses, to help make a difference by joining the circle of monthly giving. We are a 33 year old, tax exempt organization that needs additional support throughout the year. Donations will be applied to either our college scholarship program, our social assistance-needy fund, or our social change/social justice initiatives.

If your heart speaks and you would like to support the organization this way, please go to your PayPal account and make a donation to the Mass. Center for Native American Awareness (or mcnaa@aol.com) then click "make this a monthly donation." Or you can mail a check monthly to the organization at: MCNAA, ATTN: Monthly Giving Circle, 85 Constitution Lane, Suite 3-B1, Danvers, MA. Thank you. ■

"No one has ever become poor from giving." – Anne Frank



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YEAR-ROUND GIVING FORM

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I want to “pay it forward” with a tax-deductible gift in the amount of:

\$250.00 \$500.00 \$1,000.00 \$1,500.00 \$2,500.00 \$3,000.00

\$4,000.00 \$5,000.00 \$10,000.00 \$20,00.00 Other _____

I have a piece of property (land or building) that I want to donate to MCNAA.

Please make your check payable to: MCNAA and mail it with this form to:

MCNAA, 85 Constitution Lane, Suite 3-B1, Danvers, MA 01923

Or make an on-line donation this way: Go to your PayPal account and make a donation to the Mass. Center for Native American Awareness (or mcnaa@aol.com).

Thank you for your generosity. All contributions are tax deductible to the extent permissible by law. A gift over \$250 will receive a tax receipt letter. Massachusetts Center for Native American Awareness, Inc. is recognized as tax exempt under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, Tax ID # 04-3049162.