



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

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MCNAA TurtleTalk – January – March 2021

WHAT WE'VE BEEN DOING AT MCNAA

The MCNAA office remains closed to the public during the pandemic, but we are still working tirelessly, keeping daily operations going. Over the last three months we:

- Assisted needy Native families and Elders – mailed out food gift cards, paid for furnace repairs as well as utility bills.
- Worked on daily administrative tasks (memberships, bookkeeping, grant applications, e-mail inquiries, social media updates, etc.).
- Helped coordinate two virtual book discussions and a Talking Circle. ■



**MCNAA BOARD MEMBER SITS ON ECCF'S RACIAL
EQUITY COMMITTEE**

by Board Member Burne Stanley-Peters

In January 2021, Essex County Community Foundation (ECCF) reached out to us to share news about their increasing commitment to racial equity and racial justice and their intentions to develop a Committee that will help advise them on this journey and keep them accountable. After asking for a MCNAA member to join the group, we recommended Board Member Claudia Fox Tree to sit on their Racial Equity Committee.

The purpose of the Committee is to "advise ECCF staff and trustees in its current and evolving racial equity strategy and hold them accountable for the actions needed to effectively bring about change."

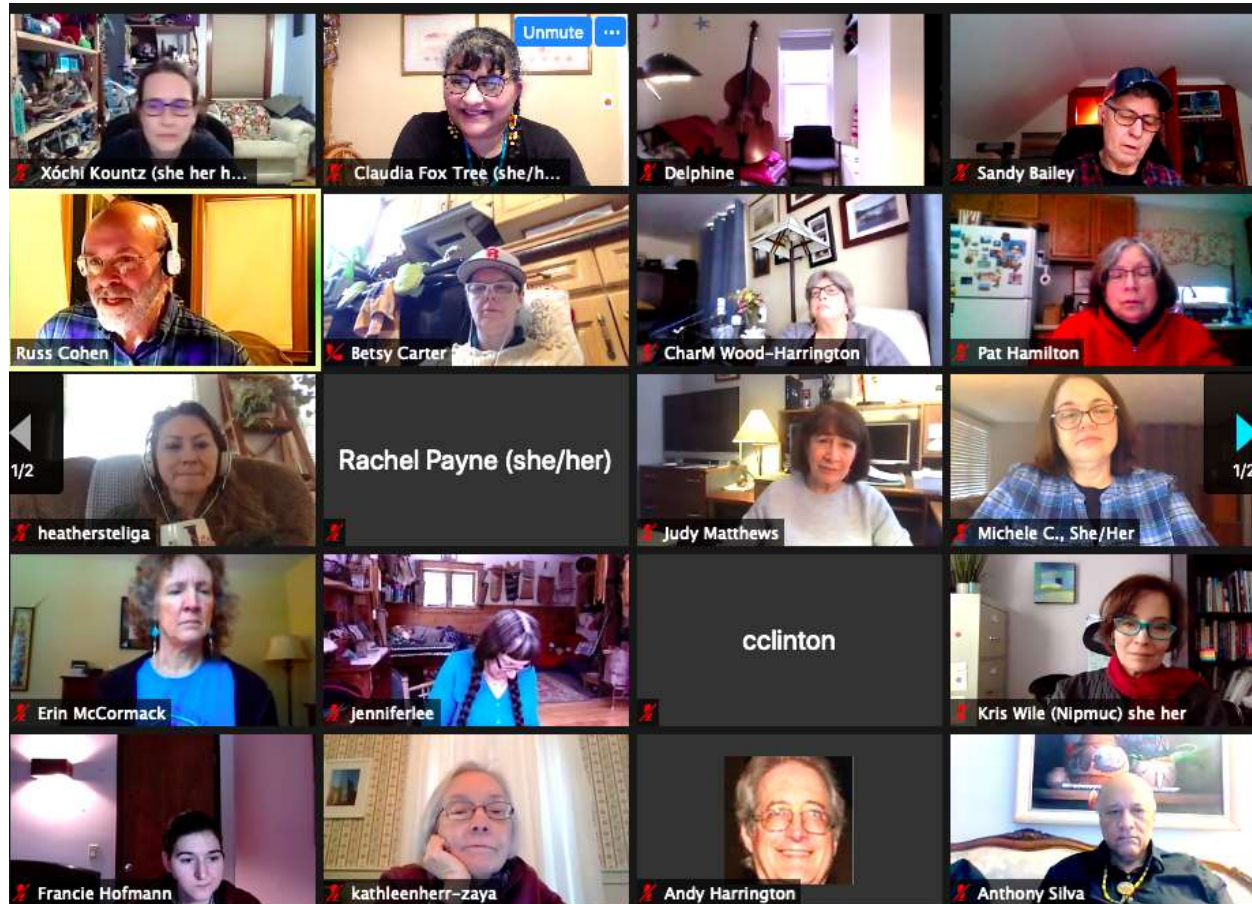
A few expectations of committee members is to:

- Make recommendations on needed actions and evaluate the effectiveness of their work.
- Review materials provided and offer feedback and ideas to further develop, advance and evaluate strategy, practice, and actions.

The committee just formed and held its first meeting on March 15, 2021 at which time they established intentions and group agreements and reviewed their "Racial Equity Strategy" plan. Claudia is excited about this opportunity and looks forward to the monthly meetings. ■

MCNAA HELD ITS FIRST VIRTUAL BOOK DISCUSSION – A HUGE SUCCESS

by Board Member Anthony SkyHawk



On February 15, 2021, MCNAA held its first in a series of virtual book discussions of noted Native American authors. MCNAA members and friends were invited to read a selected book by a respected Native American author. It was decided that *Braiding Sweetgrass*, written by Robin Wall Kimmerer, was highly recommended. An enrolled citizen of the Potawatomi Nation, Dr. Kilmer is a mother, scientist, and decorated professor. Her book *Braiding Sweetgrass* is a nonfiction book of Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants. The book is about plants and botany as seen through Native American as well as Western scientific traditions. Robin Kimmerer is known for her scholarship on traditional ecological knowledge, ethnobotany, and moss.

The discussion was moderated by Board Member Claudia Fox Tree along with Advisory Council Member Erin McCormack, with technical support by MCNAA Member Xochi Kountz all of whom were the driving forces behind the book discussion. All continue to be super supportive of MCNAA's mission and worked diligently to make this event successful.

Prior to the discussion, they made numerous attempts to reach out to the book's author to possibly drop in and say a little about her book. Unfortunately, Professor Kimmerer experienced an overwhelming demand for appearances to promote her book and her schedule would not permit her to be available on the 15th.

Despite this being our first attempt at a virtual book discussion, more than half attended of the 97 people who expressed an interest and registered for the discussion.

Participants were asked to note 3-4 quotes of interest that they found in the book and be prepared to discuss one in smaller break-out groups as to why they chose that particular quote. This format was hugely successful as everyone was able to speak and reflect on what the quote meant to them. This proved to be received very well by all.

After the break-out groups returned to the main room more discussions ensued with the larger group.

Despite not having the opportunity to speak with the author of *Braiding Sweetgrass*, the group was honored by a surprise visit from guest speaker Russ Cohen. Russ is a well-respected Naturalist, Wild Edibles instructor, and enthusiast as well as native edible species propagator and planter. He is also the author of the foraging book: "Wild Plants I Have Known...and Eaten". His presentation and discussion were received with overwhelming interest by the participants. The MCNAA Leadership extends our special thanks to Russ.



We would also like to once again thank Claudia, Erin, and Xochi for their hard work in making this such a successful MCNAA event.

We look forward to our next book discussion will be on Tuesday, April 20, 2021 at 3:00 PM. The title "As Long As Grass Grows: The Indigenous Fight for Environmental Justice, from Colonization to Standing Rock" by Dina Gilio Whitaker. ■

Be strong, but not rude; Be kind, but not weak; Be bold but not bully;
Be humble, but not timid; Be proud, but not arrogant.



www.mass.gov/dph/bsas

BOARD MEMBER SITS ON COMMUNITY ADVISORY BOARD OF BUREAU OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE SERVICES (BSAS)

by Board Member Burne Stanley-Peters

MCNAA was invited to have a seat on the Bureau of Substance Abuse Services (BSAS) Community Advisory Board. The offer came through Cedric Woods, Director of the Institute for New England Native American Studies at U Mass Boston. Board Member, Dawn Duncan, who has experience from a program development, policy, and public health perspective, was recommended by MCNAA. Meeting every other Wednesday at noon, the goal of the Board is mainly to keep one another (tribal communities and Native non-profits) apprised as to what is going on as well as to hear from BSAS on new initiatives. ■

RADIO INTERVIEWS & PODCASTS MCNAA PARTICIPATED IN!

by Board Member Claudia Fox Tree

During the week of February 15, 2021, I participated in a series of radio/podcast interviews with Debby Irving. During the interviews, listeners were directed to the 21 Day Challenge that appears on our website, among other things. Here’s a list of the events:



PODCAST & RADIO CONVERSATIONS WITH KIM CARSON

Mornings on FM1065 - Kalamazoo, Battle Creek, Lansing & Grand Rapids

BREAK TIME WITH THOMAS REHFELD

WBEV AM WXRO FM - Milwaukee area morning talk show

COMMUNITY VOICES FOR CHANGE WITH RICHARD RUDOLPH

WMPG FM - Portland, ME

Non-commercial station owned by the University of Southern Maine. Had only done one show a couple of years ago about the Maine-Wabanaki Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

SIGNAL BOOST WITH ZERLINA MAXWELL & JESS MCINTOSH

<https://dailydodge.com/wbev/>

The only daily feminist morning show in America hosted by political commentators Zerlina Maxwell and Jess McIntosh. These partners in feminism explore politics and culture with a race and gender lens. They also create a space to have those uncomfortable conversations that lead to transformational change--with a few cameos from newsmakers like presidential candidates,

activists and A-list celebs. Signal Boost is designed to keep progressives up to speed on today's realities and gives out marching orders on how to help.

TOP OF MIND WITH JULIE ROSE

<https://www.byuradio.org/e9a84fc9-4bb1-476f-bd5d-0e907b754af8>

BYU Radio

Informative, unflinching conversations that go beyond mere headlines and sound bites.

(Interview here: <https://www.byuradio.org/cf66dfe3-4388-4d00-9994-c001bd9d4ab5>)

THOM HARTMANN SHOW

<https://www.thomhartmann.com/radio>

Thom Hartmann is the #1 progressive radio talk show host in the US and a New York Times bestselling author, including 4 Project Censored awards ■

MCNAA GIVE-AWAY/GAVE AWAY

by Board Member Burne Stanley-Peters and Advisory Council Member Erin McCormack

A recent generous donation of clean, good quality rolls of leather was donated to MCNAA. While portions of the leather were put aside for craft-making at the children's table when we resume in-person pow-wows, some of it was made available to MCNAA members who are



artisan. It was offered free of charge to those who were willing to pick it up in Bedford, MA from Advisory Council Member Erin McCormack (in her garage while social distancing and a mask.) The leather included rolls that were suede as well as stiff, and in various colors such as browns, grays and black. Most rolls were approximately 3-4 ft. by 7-8 ft. and could be cut smaller.

Within days of the announcement on face book, all of the leather was picked up and given away. We are thrilled to have been gifted such great quality leather and had the opportunity to share it with other crafters. ■

*To forget ones ancestors is like a river without a source
or a tree without roots.*

MCNAA HELD ITS FIRST VIRTUAL TALKING CIRCLE

by Board Members Burne Stanley-Peters and Claudia Fox Tree



On Tuesday, March 16, 2021 at 4PM, MCNAA hosted a virtual Talking Circle which offered people a safe and open space to express their feelings about the pandemic. Although we can't reveal specific discussions, the focus of most conversations were on the following:

- How important it is to connect with people (missing community, missing people who have walked on, asking for prayers for a few.)
- How nature heals (doing the best to get outside), dance, exercise, online yoga, etc.
- Most are doing okay (worried about vaccine, but worried about contracting COVID more.)
- Send prayers of healing to those in need. Healing, in general, with other compounded issues (anxiety, depression, loss, and more.)
- Hearing stories is important (even if/when the stories are tough.)
- Missing being in person (pow wows, being in the company of others, not always talking – just being in their company.)

Hopefully those who participated, found some solace in the discussions as we all need to heal from this COVID experience, and community is part of healing. Aho! ■

“The earth will not continue to offer its harvest, except with faithful stewardship. We cannot say we love the land and then take steps to destroy it for use by future generations.” -..... John Paul II

COMING UP

SECOND BOOK DISCUSSION “AS LONG AS GRASS GROWS”

by Board Member Burne Stanley-Peters and Advisory Council Member Erin McCormack



On Tuesday, April 20, 2021, MCNAA will host its second virtual book discussion on “As Long As Grass Grows: The Indigenous Fight for Environmental Justice, from Colonization to Standing Rock” by Dina Gilio Whitaker.

Join us to share time together and offer responses to this short but densely packed book, starting with an exciting chapter on Standing Rock. The author has become a leading voice in environmental action and Indigenous Peoples activist groups, looking to understand and work with each other to address justice and land-use issues.

Through the unique lens of "Indigenized environmental justice," Indigenous researcher and activist Dina Gilio-Whitaker explores the fraught history of treaty violations, struggles for food and water security, and protection of sacred sites, while highlighting the important leadership of Indigenous women in this centuries-long struggle. As Long As Grass Grows gives readers an accessible history of Indigenous resistance to government and corporate incursions on their lands and offers new approaches to environmental justice activism and policy.

We invite you to join us. To reserve your spot, please RSVP at: www.mcnaa.org/book-discussion. A link will be e-mailed closer to the discussion date. ■

YOUTH TALKING CIRCLE BEING PLANNED – OPEN TO ALL!

by Board Member Burne Stanley-Peters

We know there are youth who are experiencing social isolation and might want to gather on-line with other youth to share some of their thoughts and feelings about the pandemic. With this in mind, we are planning a virtual Youth Talking Circle soon which will be led by Board Member Anthony SkyHawk and Advisory Council Member Eva Blake. If you have a child, children, or grandchildren between the ages of 8-12 years old who might benefit from this small 30-minute Talking Circle, please send an e-mail to: mcnaa@aol.com. Include their first name and age. We are looking at a date in late April and will let you know when it is scheduled. The Circle is open to all youth. ■



CELEBRATE EARTH DAY

by Board Member Burne Stanley-Peters

This year Earth Day is on April 22. While every day is technically a day to be kind to Mother Earth, it's a conscientious reminder of her beauty, of our interconnectedness to her, and of our responsibility to protect her.

In honor and appreciation, here are a few ways that we can celebrate Earth Day in our everyday lives and get into new habits to help save Mother Earth:



- Spend time in nature.
- Plant a tree.
- Eat vegetarian.
- Start recycling.
- Look for ways to save energy.
- Pick up litter.
- Say no to plastic bags.
- Read more online and reduce printing.
- Go off-grid and turn off your electronics.
- Get a programmable thermostat.
- Fix leaky faucets.
- Use rechargeable batteries.
- Take a walk outside.
- Use a reusable water bottle.
- Clean out your garage and donate to local charities.
- Opt out of junk mail.
- Start your own vegetable garden.
- Buy used and recycled products.
- Eat local, organic food for the day.
- Lower the temperature on your water heater.
- Try carpooling and sharing a ride.
- Compost your garbage.
- Open the windows instead of using air conditioning.
- Turn off the lights when you leave a room.
- Use environmental friendly cleaning materials.