

# TURTLETALK NEWSLETTER

A Quarterly Publication of  
Mass. Center for Native American Awareness, Inc.  
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## AUTUMN-WINTER 2008

**GOVERNING BOARD:** President: Burne Stanley-Peters; Board Members: Dawn Duncan, Claudia Fox Tree, Marie Levenson, Kim Orben, Anthony Silva, and Maria Wilkins.

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**FOUNDER:** Burne Stanley-Peters

**NEWSLETTER CONTRIBUTORS:** Joyce Rain Anderson, Claudia Fox Tree, Anthony Silva and Burne Stanley. ■

## MCNAA NEWS & INFORMATION

### INTERTRIBAL POW-WOW, HAVERHILL, MA

*by Anthony Silva*

The prediction of heavy rains and wind from a high-level hurricane did not prevent our program from being held during MCNAA's annual Intertribal pow-wow on September 6 and 7, 2008. This marked the organizations' 20<sup>th</sup> consecutive year at holding the event a beautiful and scenic Plug Pond in Haverhill.



Aquayah Peters, Fancy Dancer  
*Photo by Ricky Simaratana*

The Saturday program was officially cancelled ahead of time to protect the participants who had to travel long distances, but a large contingent of hearty souls braved the elements and came out to enjoy being immersed in our Native culture. Despite the program cancellation, MCNAA was able to put together an enjoyable afternoon with the great help of some of it's members and friends.

Len Rose, MCNAA Advisory Committee Member and Shawn Elderkin were able to cajole members of the Split Father Singers to provide some spirited drumming for the dancers who attended.

Our trusted friend and emcee, Marvin Many Horses, who traveled from NH was able to fill the voids in the program to keep the audience interested and entertained with his quick-wit as well as his ability to clearly convey our history and culture.

Unfortunately, one disappointing aspect that MCNAA was unable to overcome was the cancellation by the second food vendor who sells the traditional Native foods. An important matter came up and they were not able to be there this year. Although we were unable to give the public a sampling of some of the delicious Native dishes that they sell, MCNAA and its volunteers were able to satisfy everyone's appetite with a hearty bowl of Burne's rice, beans & corn, as well as hamburgers, hot dogs, snack foods, and soft drinks.

On Sunday, the Creator saw to it that the sun would shine for a better day. This was evidenced by the large turnout of people eager to share in our rich culture and join in the program. MCNAA did not disappoint anyone. We were able to provide the drumming music of both the Split Feather Singers and the Iron River Singers; music of the Andes by Manuel Cachimuel; along with a full arena of enthusiastic dancers.

The MCNAA Board would like to extend its sincere gratitude to those individuals who stepped up at the last minute during this tumultuous time to help pull together an enjoyable program and atmosphere for those who braved the elements. ■



## **KIWANIS CLUB PRESENTATION**

*by Claudia Fox Tree*

The Massachusetts Center for Native American Awareness (MCNAA) is frequently contacted by schools and civic organizations who are looking for speakers on Native American topics, and especially this time of year for Native American Heritage Month. The Kiwanis Club of Malden calls every year and this year, as a board member, I was available to present at one of their regular meetings on October 9th.

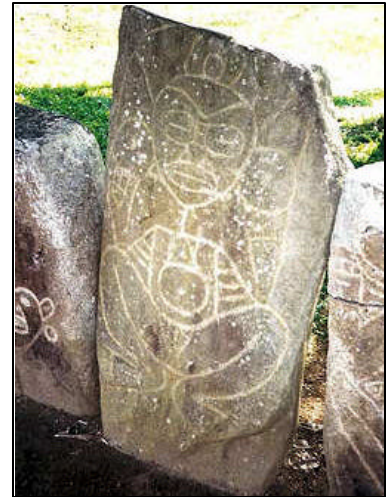
The Kiwanis website says, "Kiwaniis, through guidance and example, works to develop future generations of leaders. Every day, Kiwanians are revitalizing neighborhoods, organizing youth-sports programs, tutoring, building playgrounds, and performing countless other projects to help children and communities." This was all too clear at this luncheon which was timed so that principals, administrators, and even Youth Kiwanis club members could attend. Before lunch, new members were inducted and youth members had an opportunity to speak about service projects they were leading at Malden High School.

After lunch, I did a presentation about the 1492 contact experience between my ancestors and Christopher Columbus. I started by explaining the importance of music in bringing the community together, as well as keeping oral traditions and history alive. Throughout the PowerPoint presentation, I shared several traditional Arawak songs on the hand drum, explained the beings who were being honored, and connected the songs to contributions, history, and culture. For example, a song honoring the sea turtle (carey), which was used for food, also brought in the story of "Turtle-woman" who features so prominently in the Taino-Arawak story of Creation. Turtle-woman sprang full-grown from the hump on the back of Demiban (Diminan) Caracaracol. He was one of the four quadruplet brothers born of Atabey's earthly

manifestation. Atabey is part woman and part frog and is the prominent female spiritual being of the creation stories. The Turtle carries the secret of the Sacred Calendar on its back. The pattern of scales on this common reptile establishes the combination of numbers that define the lunar calendar cycle. The circle of scales that surrounds the edges of its round shell add up to 28, the sacred number of days that comprise the lunar cycle (28 days from full moon to full moon). Surrounded by this circle of small scales is a geometric pattern of thirteen larger scales in the center of the shell. This pattern describes the 13 "moons" in the lunar year of the calendar. One song, can lead to many stories and much information as it has been given to use through the earth and her creatures.

I also shared direct quotes from Columbus's journal which described the people he encountered, "[They are] people so full of love and without greed... I believe there is no better race or land in the world. They exhibit great love toward all others in preference to themselves. I did not find, as some of us had expected, any cannibals among them, but, on the contrary, men of great deference and kindness." Among other things, the Arawak introduced the world to pineapples (still a traditional sign of "welcoming"), hammocks, tobacco, cigars, and barbecue.

After sharing the important stories and contributions of the Arawak people, I then explained some of the many less than pleasant realities for the Arawak which we now know Christopher Columbus ordered or personally did. He also wrote in his journal, "They are good to be ordered about, to be made to work, plant, and do whatever is wanted, to build towns and be taught to go clothed and accept our customs." In fact, Columbus mentions gold in his journal 70 times in his first 2 weeks in the islands. The very first day, Columbus "took" several Native boys aboard his ship and asked them to show him where the gold was. When gold could not be found, cotton was ordered to be brought. If the People did not comply, they were tortured or killed. On subsequent voyages, Columbus came with tools to enslave: chains, branding irons, soldiers, hunting dogs. I didn't share too many of the gory details with this group, per their request, but Columbus's intention to enslave, kill, and transform the land was clear.



Atabey stone  
Photo by Claudia Fox Tree

I also discussed how the Arawak resisted Columbus by fighting and fleeing with their leaders, Hatuay and Coanabo, and how we continue to fight for all Indigenous rights with our current leaders. I ended by asking whether or not Columbus was really "a great explorer"? Columbus came with the intention of enslaving. He set the tone and example for later Conquistadors, one of genocide, cultural destruction, and environmental damage. Columbus started the international kidnapping of human beings (aka: slave trade). When enslaved Native Americans died, he still needed to pay back investors, forcing a new people, stolen from Africa, to work on sugar cane plantations. On the other hand, bringing together different cultures allowed exchange that revitalized Europe (Industrialization, agriculture) and changed the culture of Native People (beads, horse, metal). Can you imagine Ireland without the potato or Italy without the tomato? Both of these foods are indigenous to the Americas. Although Columbus was not the first person on these lands, he was the first to create an ongoing relationship which changed the world. ■

## MCNAA BENEFIT AUCTION & RECEPTION

by Claudia Fox Tree

**M**CNAA's Annual Benefit Auction was held on Sunday, October 26, 2008. It can be summed up in one word, "fun." Well, maybe two words, "fun and humorous." There were many great items on the silent auction table such as jewelry, books, baskets, pottery, blankets, and hair barrettes, but the live auction brought out the coyote spirit in us all. Items were outbid by voices shouting \$22.50 and \$81.50 (which is unusual but very funny.) It was my first time being the auctioneer and I was a little nervous, but since the microphone wasn't cooperating to full capacity, I had to use my "teacher voice" and step out from behind the podium. Once I got started, things went smoothly in the room full of eager participants, better than a classroom... dare I say. Just about everything went for over the minimum bid and a few went for more than their actual value, with the



Advisory Committee Member Eva Blake and son Quononu show hand-crafted dance stick. Photo by Liz Feitelberg

expectation that some beautiful pieces, like those from the Billy Love jewelry collection, will continue to increase in value. Before the auction adventure began, we took a moment to honor the memory of those who have passed into the spirit world (Mary Waters, Maurice Foxx, Billy Love) and most particularly Slow Turtle, co-founder of the organization. The Leadership Team and Advisory members were also introduced, and all essential volunteers who were present were recognized. It was nice to see so many folks, given all the competing events on this day. The venue still provides a convenient location, good size room, and a nice choice of appetizers. There were a few children who graciously helped me choose the winning door prizes and the all important 50/50 raffle which went to Sonya Avant-Sanders.

An event like this could not happen without the support of the entire MCNAA community. We are ever so grateful to those who donated items, time, and dollars to make this annual fundraiser successful for the MCNAA scholarship program. ■



Happy bidders Zuania and James Wood with Burne's son-in-law Jose Chacin. Photo by Liz Feitelberg



## ANNUAL HOLIDAY APPEAL

by Burne Stanley

**I**t's that time of year when we ask you to make a charitable donation to the Massachusetts Center for Native American Awareness (MCNAA). Through our programs, our needy constituents benefit from your tax-deductible gift. This year, we have identified two programs\* that need your support the most. But first, we'd like to give you an overview of some of the things MCNAA has accomplished this year.

Accomplishments:

We began the year continuing to make payments to utility companies from December

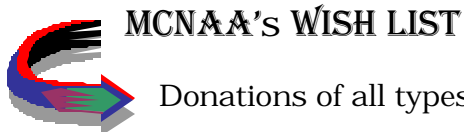
2007 on behalf of needy constituents; and held our annual Mid-winter Social and Pot-luck Feast in Middleboro (January). We held our 19th Year Anniversary Celebration at the Holiday Inn-Randolph (April). Awarded ten scholarships to Native American students for the 2008 Spring and 2008 Fall Semesters. After three years of meetings, we completely revamped and finalized the strategic plan. To date, we wrote and distributed three issues of the TurtleTalk newsletter. We held three Cultural Arts Events [Marshfield Fairgrounds, Topsfield Fairgrounds, and Plug Pond in Haverhill.] We held activities for the Youth Empowerment & Cultural Enrichment Program; assisted colleges and various civic organizations develop ideas and topics for workshops and lectures; and held our Annual Benefit Auction & Reception (October). Our year was full of cultural education & awareness, fundraising, and assisting our needy Native American constituency.

The Need:

1. Social Assistance Program. We have a list of 55 Native families who have requested assistance from MCNAA to help pay their heating bill. Financial assistance from MCNAA (and from your donation) will be an enormous help to these families with young children and to some of our Elders who are also struggling. Please be reminded that MCNAA makes payments directly to the utility companies for our constituents.

2. Scholarship Program. We have a list of over 100 Native students who are attending Mass. state colleges. For the 2009 Spring Semester, most need assistance with college related expenses. Funds from this program will help the students with travel expenses to school, meals, and most importantly..... books. Your donation will help alleviate some of the stress and financial burden for these students.

If you have just a little bit more than those less fortunate than us, please visit the "donation page" of our website [www.mcnaa.org/mcnaagift.html](http://www.mcnaa.org/mcnaagift.html). Check off one of the two programs that need your donation most (\*either the Scholarship Program or the Social Assistance Program) then fill out and print the form, and mail it to us with your check or money order. If you don't have internet access, simply look for the standard Holiday Appeal Form that was mailed to your home last week. Fill it out and mail it back to MCNAA with your contribution. We hope you'll help. ■



Donations of all types needed!

- Reams of copier paper
- New computer with flat panel monitor
- Postage stamps
- Memorial Gifts – When a friend or relative passes into the spirit world, honor their memory and send a tax-deductible contribution to MCNAA. Your contribution will be acknowledged by MCNAA to you and to the family.
- A Building – Donate a useable building/property for MCNAA's permanent administrative offices and programs. Certain tax benefits may apply.
- We will also accept a parcel of land that will be used as financing leverage to build our Center. Any size or location within the I-495 belt is acceptable. Certain tax benefits may apply. ■
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## NEWS AND EVENTS AROUND THE REGION

### CELEBRATING NATIVE AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH AT BRIDGEWATER STATE COLLEGE

by Joyce Rain Anderson\*

In November, Bridgewater State College (BSC) held a Film Series and several events in celebration of Native American Heritage Month. During the month, four films were featured including *Skins*, *Smoke Signals*, *The Doe Boy* and *133 Skyway*. On November 13, Dr. Andy Holman and I held a panel discussion on Indigeneity and Sports. Dr. Holman presented his research on a 1928 barnstorming tour by an Ojibwa and Cree Hockey Team, and I presented my work on the issues and problems of using Native Americans as sports team mascots. The Center for Multicultural Affairs brought Randy Joseph, Jr. on November 18 to speak on Wampanoag history. On December 4, Donna Perry Mitchell was invited by Dr. Curtiss Hoffman to speak on "Blood Memory: A Glimpse into the History of Survival of the Perry Clan of Watuppa Reservation." All events have been sponsored by The Office of Institutional Diversity, The Ethnic Studies Program, the CMA, and the English and Anthropology Departments.

A highlight of the month was the campus visit by Randy Redroad who directed *The Doe Boy* and *133 Skyway*. Both screenings were standing room only. On November 19<sup>th</sup>, there was a reception for Randy before *The Doe Boy* was shown. For those of you who don't know him, Randy Redroad is an amazing, humorous speaker and a serious film director. He told us about his background and his intentions in creating a feature film like *The Doe Boy* which debuted at the Sundance Film Festival in 2001 and won the NHK International Filmmaker's award among others. The main character, Hunter, has hemophilia and Randy commented on his ironic choice of having a Native American with a blood disease. Following the film, he took questions from the packed house ranging from how much was cut from the film, to dealing with traditions versus stereotypes of Native Americans to how much of the film is autobiography. His answers were frank and honest. After the film, Randy was presented with a blanket and tobacco ties. On November 20, the short film *133 Skyway* was shown to another packed room. Using remarkable camera work, this film focuses on addictions and homelessness. The macro and micro shots contribute to the stark themeline; all the music is written and performed by Randy Redroad as well. Randy spoke about how the film was made in Canada with a cast selected at the last minute. As a filmmaker, he is precise and driven; he is serious while filming, and often the crew does not know of his innate humor until after the filming is done. Following the film, several faculty and students had lunch with Randy prior to his departure. During the events and later, Randy discussed his current projects which are all short films. He also discussed his plans for an album and a book. We hope to bring him to campus again next year.



L-R Dr. Benjamin Carson, Randy Redroad and MCNAA Members Harry Robinson and Joyce Rain Anderson. Photo by Donna Wood

In addition to these events, a display was exhibited in one of the glass cases in Boyden Hall. Among the items on display were a circa 1900 Cherokee doll, a squash blossom necklace, children's sealskin moccasins, a small Dine blanket, and sand paintings. The library had several abstract paintings by Casey Figueroa (Apache/Irish/Mexican).

The Educational Resource Center in the library exhibited Native American children's books. All the talks and displays were designed to bring awareness of Native Americans to the general population at BSC. The film series was a great success with several MCNAA members attending. We are already planning for next year's Native American Heritage Month so that more of the events can be integrated into curricula. More importantly, we wish to create a welcoming environment for Native American students.

Link to Randy Redroad:

[www.randyredroad.com/](http://www.randyredroad.com/)

Link to Casey Figueroa:

[http://library.bridgew.edu/mt/max/2008/11/native\\_american\\_heritage\\_celeb.html](http://library.bridgew.edu/mt/max/2008/11/native_american_heritage_celeb.html)

*\*Dr. Joyce Rain Anderson is a Member of the Mass. Center for Native American Awareness and an Assistant Professor of English at Bridgewater State College ■*

## **NATIVE AMERICAN EXPO – COMING TO SPRINGFIELD!**

Hosted by the Historical Nipmuc Tribe Cultural Committee

Springfield College, 263 Alden St., East Campus Building, Springfield, Mass.

Saturday January 17, 2009 - Noon to 6PM

There will be:

- \* Traditional Drumming
- \* Dancing
- \* Storytelling
- \* Native Foods
- \* Guest Speakers
- \* Environmental Awareness
- \* Native American Market Place
- \* Information Booths on Eastern Tribes & Cultural Survival
- \* Native American College Recruitment Booths
- \* Native American Health Information
- \* Basket Making and other Crafts on Display
- \* Native Artwork on Display
- \* Hands-on activities for kids
- \* Raffles and much more!

Native Vendors and Crafters Wanted! To be a vender or a crafter (to display you're work), please contact: Juaquina at 413-273-3271 or email: [jnipmuc1@gmail.com](mailto:jnipmuc1@gmail.com) ■

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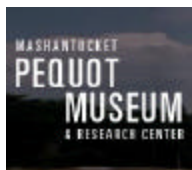
**Free Estimates**



## MCNAA CALENDAR

Events for the beginning of 2009

Sat., Jan. 24th Annual Pot-luck Feast, Social, and Scholarship Drawing, VFW, 30 Station Street, Middleboro, MA 5PM [Potluck Buffet, Social Dancing, Drumming & Singing, Info Table, Raffles, and maybe a small silent auction.] ■



## MASHANTUCKET PEQUOT MUSEUM & RESEARCH CENTER

110 Pequot Trail, Mashantucket, CT 06338

Special Exhibit - Arctic Spirit: Inuit Art from the Heard Museum

Exhibition offers a rare opportunity to view 150 examples of the artwork of the Inuit peoples from Siberia, Alaska, Greenland, and the Canadian Arctic.  
December 28, 2008 - March 1, 2009, daily 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., last admission at 3 p.m.  
Free with regular Museum admission. ■