

TURTLETALK NEWSLETTER

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Mass. Center for Native American Awareness, Inc.
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SPRING 2009

LEADERSHIP TEAM: President: Burne Stanley-Peters; Board Members: Dawn Duncan, Claudia Fox Tree, Kim Orben, Anthony Silva, and Maria Wilkins.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS: Don Barnaby, Eva Blake, Autaquay Chacin, Anne Foxx-Whitford, and John Sly Fox Oakley.

FOUNDER: Burne Stanley-Peters

NEWSLETTER CONTRIBUTORS: John Goff, Claudia Fox Tree, Anthony Silva, and Burne Stanley. ■

MCNAA NEWS & INFORMATION

MCNAA SOCIAL, POTLUCK FEAST & SCHOLARSHIP DRAWING

by Claudia Fox Tree

On Saturday, January 24, 2009 we held our Annual Social & Potluck Feast. The evening began before the potluck dinner was even ready. Len and I arrived at about 5:20 to a very crowded parking lot and drove around a couple of times before deciding to squeeze in front of a couple of cars already parked along a snow bank. We were



Photo by Liz Feitelberg

recalling that we're usually the first ones there - and we're always late - so it must mean that the place is already crowded. We thought that there might be a VFW event "downstairs," but as we entered the hall we quickly realized that the crowded parking lot was a result of all our Native friends already having arrived and staked out a table!

I brought sour cream cookies with butter-cream frosting made from scratch and decorated with sprinkles to represent the four directions. They were gone before the cream was set out next to the coffee and before the dinner potluck was announced "open." Dr. Waters did an Opening Thanksgiving in which he spoke of our new President, his official statement on Native People, and the sense of hope many Americans now have. We thanked the animals, sun, water, and plants for the food we were about to eat and closed the ceremony with a blessing from the Drum honoring the meal we were about to eat.

As the elders lined up, they could see that the dishes incorporated many indigenous foods: beans, corn, rice, root vegetables, venison, wild turkey, and corn bread. The line moved quickly and the meaning of "pot latch" came to mind. The Northwest Pacific Coast leaders would gather surplus (foods, blankets, etc.) from The People and then redistribute it in a great feast. These "pot latches" have become our modern "pot lucks" and tonight we had more than luck, maybe spirit moving through the chefs, because there was a great balance and plenty of food for all. I think I can speak for many when I say that I am thankful we have so many excellent cooks in our community who are willing to share their results in this wonderful feasting way.

Dancing was a flexible, smooth flow between the two drums the Iron River Singers and Eastern Suns.....and participants who were moved entered the Circle. The highlight of the evening for me was a hand drum round dance. The inner circle of children was larger than the outer circle of adults. It was a joy to dance around this small vision of the future.

In between the dancing, there was a small silent auction which raised funds for the MCNAA Scholarship fund. Speaking of this fund, many of the recipients of the Native American tuition waiver program were present. They had to pre-register a week in advance. Each had an opportunity to participate in a drawing. Five students won monies ranging from \$200 to \$750. They were:

Callie Daniels, Mashpee Wampanoag – Roxbury Community College (\$500)

Porsha Goodman, Coharie Tribe – Westfield State College (\$750)

Jolene Jalbert, Nipmuck – Framingham State College (\$200)

April Martin, MicMac – U Mass Amherst (\$300)

Ceni Myles, Navajo/Mohegan – U Mass Boston (\$250)

All of the other students who attended the drawing received either a \$20 gift card to Hess Gas Station or a \$15.00 rechargeable gift card to Dunkin Donuts. It was very exciting.



Porsha Goodman, Callie Daniels, April Martin, Ceni Myles, and Jolene Jalbert.
Photo by Liz Feitelberg

During the evening, birthday wishes were extended to Mother Bear and to Jim Peters whose birthdays are in January around this time. As well, a cake was brought out and a celebratory dance was done for Myrna Nuey who was celebrating her 60th birthday.

At this special event, we always have a wonderful time connecting with Native friends, students, and parents. We look forward to January 2010 for another notable social time. ■

MCNAA'S 20TH YEAR ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

by Claudia Fox Tree and Burne Stanley

On Sunday, March 29, 2009 in the Ballroom at the Holiday Inn in Randolph, MA, MCNAA marked its 20th year of existence. A full room of approximately 165 friends, members, and supporters were welcomed. Because of the large crowd, we were delayed in starting the program by almost 45 minutes. The various tribes, groups, and families who bought "tables" were introduced. They included The Pocasset

Wampanoags, The Nipmuc Nation, The Mashpee Wampanoag Tribal Council, The Seaconke Wampanoags, The Chappaquiddick Wampanoags, Sly Fox, Claire Oakley & their Friends; The Wolf Cry Singers, The Avant-Sanders Family, The Miles Family, The Mashpee Women's Medicine Society, and the Waters Family. All are close supporters of MCNAA.

The meal was late and a little cold so some complained but if you enjoy chicken piccata (the one with lemon sauce) you would have undoubtedly enjoyed the dinner. The meal also included steak tips, rice pilaf, mixed vegetables and an array of delectable desserts accompanied by coffee and tea.

How do we mark time? Birth, marriage, divorce, special events, tragedies, educational degrees, jobs, and deaths are just some of the ways. Through it all we have friends, family, and community. We are all connected and our community supports us as we pass through days and nights, weeks, months, and years. Twenty years ago, most of us did not have an email address and there was no affordable Internet! Can you even remember that time? It was also a few years before 1992, the 500 year anniversary of that lost sailor named Columbus. No one really knew about my nation (I had not even seen the word in print until I entered college). Twenty years ago, I had just finished college, recently been married (now divorced), had no children, and had very little connection to other Arawak people (the people who helped that sailor survive). Now I can connect with Arawak and Taino people all over the country. My indigenous community is only a keyboard click away. Life has surely changed! These are great times in which we are living.



Dr. Herbert R. Waters, Jr. Keynote Speaker
Photo by John Goff

Anniversaries bring out thoughts and memories, and they also bring out faces. That is how I remember the twentieth anniversary of the birth of MCNAA. Young faces and the elder faces, familiar and new faces sitting in groups of ten around tables lined in rows, filling the entire space. What a wonderful way to honor the MCNAA. Faces all around us... in person, on photo displays, in an electronic slide show, and in the program booklet.

Dr. Bert Waters said in his keynote that success is all around us. The fact that we as Native Americans have our ceremonies, a Repatriation Act, and laws to protect our Native children is due to a long line of visionaries who include Metacom, Wovoka, Big Foot, and our own visionary, Slow Turtle. His vision is embodied in what we were celebrating. Dr. Waters went on to mention many visionaries. Nanepashemet inspired us just by being and doing. He was an urban Indian who showed us a way in this modern world. Frank James was an Aquinnah Wampanoag who wrote a speech in the early seventies to be read on Thanksgiving Day in Plymouth. He submitted it ahead of time and was denied permission to give the speech, but that did not stop it from being shared over and over in the years ahead and establishing the "National Day of Mourning." For twenty years, the head of the visionary Metacom was displayed on a stake, but it took 350 years for a plaque explaining the story to be placed on the same spot. Thankfully, things change and people can learn the more accurate story.

Dr. Waters pointed out that visionaries lead by example and actions. Chief Lopez, Barack Obama, and Cedric Cromwell are all examples. Jim Peters is the executive director for Native American affairs. Throughout it all, Native Americans are dancing at Pow Wow, staying connected to traditions and leading by example. Annawon, the

Edmond brothers, Eastern Suns, Linda Coombs, and Mother Bear have all been integral in keeping the spirit of our ancestors alive and educating the public about our strength as a traditional and contemporary people. He began his closing remarks by reminding us that Burne Stanley-Peters is the reason we are here, her organization, and the events it sponsors give us the opportunity to be our whole selves. Dr. Waters ended his talk by challenging the Massachusetts Natives to form a federation.

For me, just hearing all those names brought their image and stories to my mind. It brought their power, their good medicine, and their vision into the present and reminded me of the adage: We're not where we want to be, but we sure are not where we were!

In addition to this remarkable speech, a surprise honoring ceremony was held for one of our long-time Advisory Committee Member and supporters - Anne Foxx-Whitford. Anne, associated with MCNAA since the time of its inception, has been a great source of moral support, inspiration, and help to the organization as a whole. It was wonderful to have her brother Vincent there since her late brother Maurice, who attended this event every year, is no longer with us. Her children and some of her



Anne Foxx is honored!
Photo by Jason Wilkins

grandchildren were there as well and came prepared to present "grandmother" with flowers. Anne was gifted by MCNAA officials with a Pendleton blanket, an award recognition plaque, a photo display board of her with family and friends, and a handcrafted necklace accompanied by a sage bundle. Husband Emil (Raining Horse), Mother Bear of the Mashpee Women's Medicine Society, and Chief Windsong Blake of the Assonet Band of Wampanoags had short

stories to tell and a few words to say about Anne. The Iron River Singers and the Wolf Cry Singers were on hand to sing and hand drum. Some family members and

a few traditional men stood close behind her as we honored Anne during this special ceremony.

The silent auction was a huge success. Every item on the table was bid on. It seemed to go smoothly and all the high bidders were there at the end to pay for their items. I think now everyone understands that by winning a bid on an item, you are also making a donation to MCNAA because all of the items (new and used, Native and non-Native) are donated. Thank you to all who contributed to this important part of the event.

The 50/50, the door prize and the center-piece raffles all went well. Our friend and volunteer, Geoff Peters, won over \$170 in the 50/50 raffle.

The Program and Ad Book not only contains ads from a number of our supporters but has sections on "Did You Know That...", "Moments To Remember..." ending with a section "Remembering". In this last section it lists the names and dates of the people who are no longer with us who touched our lives in various ways. There are quite a few memories tucked in this document. For those of you who attended, you found just a few copies of the Book on your table. The rest of the books arrived too late to hand out. If you are interested in having a copy, please e-mail or call the office.

The photo slide show captured 20 years of some of MCNAA's strongest supporters and some of our special events throughout the years. Included at the end were photos of

friends who have passed into the spirit world. Accompanied by music, this section proved to be a touching tribute to those who are no longer with us.

Most of our regular attendees enjoyed the feeling that embodied the room. It was great to see how the overall event wasn't overshadowed by some of the delays (and cold food complaints.) The love, patience, camaraderie, and the understanding of most, seemed to win out. We look forward to MCNAA's 21st Anniversary Celebration in 2010. ■

MCNAA LEADERSHIP TEAM MEMBER RESIGNS

On April 2, 2009, Marie Levenson resigned from the MCNAA Leadership Team (Board of Directors). Marie has been part of the team since 2002 but has been involved with MCNAA for over 20 years. In a conversation back in March and in her letter dated March 14, 2009, Marie explains that her career has changed and many options have opened in the field of working with preschool children in Special Education. It is a very fulfilling and rewarding endeavor that is close to her heart but she confesses that it is a time consuming endeavor. Over the past 20 years, Marie has been a great inspiration and help to the MCNAA Board with our special events (benefit auctions, anniversary celebrations) in Randolph and in Sharon; with the craftmaking workshops and lectures when they were held regularly in Reading; hosting brunch Board meetings in her home on a weekend day; helping at many of the pow-wows; and has had valuable input at regular leadership team meetings.



We will miss Marie's presence as a Board member, but she will continue to volunteer in the office and at MCNAA events when possible. We were delighted to have her and husband Peter with us at MCNAA's 20th Year Anniversary Celebration in Randolph, MA.

The MCNAA Leadership Team extends a heartfelt "Thank you" to Marie for her dedication to the Leadership Team for so many years. ■



MCNAA's WISH LIST

Donations of all types needed!

- Mildly used (or new) flat panel computer monitors
- Postage stamps (now .44)
- Reams of copier paper
- 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. ■

INTO THE SPIRIT WORLD



We are sad to report that Anita (Haynes) Nielsen of Middleboro (also known as Great Star) passed away on February 15, 2009. She was a big part of MCNAA with her basket making demonstrations and her lectures (in Reading, Concord, and Revere). In her lectures, she often talked about her "Long Journey" and her younger days growing up in Mashpee. As an elder and a strong supporter of MCNAA, she was named one of our Honorary Members back in 2000. We've lost a dear friend and are terribly saddened by the news. Anita Great Star was 86 years old. ■

COMPUTERS DONATED TO MCNAA

After our computer crashed and I put out an e-mail appeal to our membership for a good used computer, a new computer system was donated to MCNAA by member Charisse Sebastian, a local IT/computer Consultant and troubleshooter. It is a Dell Inspiron 530 dual core processor, 2 GiGabyte of RAM with Windows XP SP3. She recently lost her dad and made the donation in his name. Her dad had several movements that he cared about, one being the Native American Indian community along with the Animal Rescue league/ASPCA and the LGBT community. We have received many needed items over the years, but no one has ever gone out and purchased something new for MCNAA. For this we are truly grateful. Thank you for your thoughtfulness Charisse. We are also delighted with the mildly used Dell laptop computer that was donated by member Ginny LaCrow. Thank you so much Ginny! ■

NEWS AND EVENTS AROUND THE REGION

TELEVISION PREVIEW "WE SHALL REMAIN" - TELLS NATIVE AMERICAN HISTORY, WITH NATIVE AMERICANS AT THE HELM

by Roger Catlin, Hartford Courant
April 12, 2009

When French explorer Samuel de Champlain came to America in the early 17th century, tens of thousands of native people already were settled in New England. It was so populated, the explorer decided to skip New England altogether and alter his route. He eventually founded Quebec. Centuries later, the Native American population had dwindled to the point where some tribes were at the point of extinction. Later still, the tribes returned in number and a new economic strength.

The story of native peoples — an extensive new series on the PBS series "American Experience" — begins in New England with that most mythical starting point of harmony in the New World: the first Thanksgiving of 1621.

There in Plymouth colony, the participation of the Wampanoags aided the battered pilgrims, even as their alliance with the English helped the position of the tribe in Southern New England.

"After the Mayflower," the first of the five 90-minute films that covers key moments in Native American history, up to the siege of Wounded Knee in 1973, premieres Monday. Chris Eyre of Cheyenne-Arapaho heritage, and Cathleen O'Connell directed the film,

which like the others are starkly different from the usual approach to history on "American Experience."

"Because so much of the native experience is hidden from traditional history, and because so much of our series takes place before the time of photography, we embrace dramatic filmmaking techniques much more fully than we've done in 20 years of 'American Experience's history," O'Connell says. "We've paired feature filmmakers with documentary filmmakers and rigorously developed a shooting style that we feel is believable, authentic and compelling."

More important, "We Shall Remain" was written in what she calls "an unprecedented set of collaborations between natives and non-natives. "We relied heavily on members of the native communities whose histories we are telling, who are experts in language and culture. But many of them — principals, extras, cultural consultants, language coaches — had never been on a film set before."

Stories of the Connecticut tribes are found in the initial film, largely by way of the Pequot War. But it is the relationships between the Plymouth settlers and the Wampanoag chief Massasoit and, later, his son Metacomet, otherwise known as King Philip, that take up the initial film.

For actor Marcos Akiaten, of Chokonen, Chiricahua and Apache ancestry, who has portrayed Native Americans in a number of previous films before taking on the role of Massasoit, the production was quite a change.



Courtesy photo by Webb Chapelle, WGBH

"It was a great delight to be directed by an Indian director and an executive producer who made a tremendous amount of compromises in order to make this as authentic as possible," Akiaten says. "I've been in many of these large Indian productions that have been directed basically by Caucasians, and [this] was an opportunity for me to actually work with an Indian director. And it was through his eyes that helped bring my part and the other parts and the other factions of this movie all together as one."

Cassius Spears of Ashaway, R.I., a Narragansett and former educator and cultural adviser at the Mashantucket Pequot Museum and Research Center, has a bit part in the film. He says the efforts to get it right paid off.

"As a cultural adviser, I noticed that they put extreme effort into looking at the details," Spears says. "From the tattooing, from the dress, from language, all the material that they put together, and then again paying very close detail — I have to say it was awesome, awesome."

It wasn't an easy process, says documentary filmmaker Ric Burns, who co-directed "Tecumseh's Vision," a film about the Shawnee leader.

"From a non-native point of view, the challenges, as I see it, were really principally in two categories," Burns says. "One had to do with how do you try to create a history that bridges these cultures, which have been at times so in conflict with each other? And those times are not only in the past; they continue today."

The other challenge, he says, came in bringing the past alive.

"There's a lot of information that's out there, and any of us can go to the library and read it. But it's dead until that spark leaps from the past and from the dry documents and the statistics and is re-ignited in somebody's heart," Burns says.

"It's not just about knowing the facts. It's about having them take up a position in your own heart with enough emotional power that you're then — whether you're an actor or a director or a writer — able to communicate it to an audience so that people then are in direct contact with the most salient and tragic fact about the past, which is that it's gone, it's dead, it's not here any longer. And then suddenly, for a brief moment, the lights go down, and it is there, and you do feel it. And you don't want it to contradict the historical record, and you don't want to mythologize it, but you want to remind people today, everybody sitting in this room, that once there was a Massasoit or a Tecumseh or a Geronimo or a John Ross, that these were men and women who lived at a time — in specific places and lived their life from the inside out."

The reality of the past was made vivid through the use of almost documentary-style photography.

"The cinematography for this series is not quite like anything I've seen on public TV or, in a certain way, anywhere," Burns says. "It bridges the gap between documentary and fiction filmmaking."



Courtesy photo by Webb Chapelle, WGBH

Filmmaker Chris Eyre says he was motivated by trying to bring young Native Americans their own history.

"I was in Oregon at an Indian school, a boarding school, and I remember speaking to the Indian students. And I says, "Who are your heroes?" And somebody raised their hand, and they says ' P. Diddy. '

"Then I said, you know, 'Well, I'm thinking of a native hero. Who are your heroes?' And another kid says Tiger Woods. And I says, "Well, that's getting closer.

"But, you know, in reality, it would be nice if we had images of native people that this series, I think, provides, which are strong, progressive people who lived in a difficult time. And that was kind of my personal reason to show these characters and not keep the mythologies of just romanticizing native people historically."

•WE SHALL REMAIN first aired on Monday, April 13th at 9 p.m. on "American Experience" on PBS. Then every other week, for 4 additional Mondays, the remaining episodes aired. The 5 episode titles are: "After the Mayflower," "Tecumseh's Vision," "Trail of Tears," "Geronimo" and "Wounded Knee." ■



MCNAA CALENDAR

Events Remaining for 2009

Sat. & Sun., May 23-24 Annual Spring Planting Moon Pow-wow, Marshfield Fairgrounds, Main St., Marshfield, MA

Sat. & Sun., Sept. 12-13 Annual Inter-Tribal Pow-wow, Plug Pond, Haverhill, MA

Sun., Oct. 25 Annual Benefit Auction & Reception, Holiday Inn, Randolph, MA

Sat., Nov. 14 Nat'l Native American Heritage Day Pow-wow, Bridgewater State College, Bridgewater, MA

NOTE: To receive MCNAA's 2-page list that we publish of area pow-wows and special events sponsored by other tribes and other groups, please send a SASE to MCNAA, P.O. Box 5885, Boston, MA 02114. ■