



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

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MCNAA TURTLETALK: OCT-DEC 2023

WHAT WE'VE BEEN DOING AT MCNAA

**MASS. CENTER FOR NATIVE AMERICAN AWARENESS CELEBRATES
INDIGENOUS PEOPLES DAY IN COLLABORATION WITH BRANDEIS
UNIVERSITY**

by Burne Stanley-Peters, Board Member with input from Anthony SkyHawk, Board Member



L-R Anthony SkyHawk, Maria Wilkins, Eva Blake, Claudia Fox Tree and Dawn Duncan.

On Thursday, October 5, 2023, a highly successful collaboration was held between the Mass. Center for Native American Awareness (MCNAA) and Brandeis University. This was the first of two early celebrations in recognition of Indigenous Peoples Day (IPD). The event, held at the University's Intercultural Center, was an overwhelming success and the first official in-person event that MCNAA has held in nearly 4 years. The theme of the 2-part event was *"Building Indigenous Sovereignty Through Community."*

I was under the weather so I watched remotely while other MCNAA officials attended the impressive event in person. The main attraction of the evening was our keynote speaker, Eva



Blake, Citizen of the Assonet Band of the Wampanoag Nation, who also sits on the MCNAA Advisory Council. Eva and her family have been longtime supporters of MCNAA since her youth. Over the years, Eva developed a desire to learn her Native language and became actively involved with others in the Wôpanâak Language Reclamation Project (WLRP). This provided an opportunity for members of the Wampanoag community to reclaim their original language. Over the past few years, Eva became totally immersed. We,

at MCNAA, are always impressed when she speaks on Language Reclamation and I, personally remain in awe of her and the knowledge she has gained throughout the years since her involvement with WLRP. As the featured guest speaker, she spoke in both her Native tongue as well as English. The audience was fascinated as Eva was able to fluently speak the language as well as convey the meanings to all. Eva's talk was very informative, connecting her discussion about Indigenous language reclamation with her personal narrative. Her delivery was especially impressive!

Other speakers and participants included:



Habiba Braimah (above left), Director of the Intercultural Center. She opened the program with welcoming remarks and introduced MCNAA Board Member Dawn Duncan.



Dawn Duncan, Cherokee and Powhatan (above right), MCNAA Board Member. She spoke briefly about MCNAA and our programs.



Dr. LeManuel "Lee" Bitsóí, Diné, (above left) Vice President for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion at Brandeis University. He said a few words about the program then introduced Eva Blake, our key note speaker.

Professor Evangelina Macias, Amskapi Pikuni Blackfeet, A'aninin GrosVentre, (above right) a visiting Indigenous Scholar at Brandeis University. She gave an introduction of the Round Dance that was to take place at the end of the program.

After the presentation, the audience was invited to ask questions and then mingle with the presenters while enjoying a potpourri of delicious foods. Attendees were also invited upstairs to take part in the Community Round Dance led by Professor Macias.



On Saturday, October 7, 2023, the second Indigenous Peoples Day event was held at the University. This was another special collaboration with Brandeis University. Because of the spiritual nature of this event, no photos were allowed. This unique event was scheduled to take place outside but with the threat of inclement weather it was held indoors.

Larry Spotted Crow Mann (Nipmuc) delivered a moving land blessing with song and a hand drum. MCNAA Board Member, Claudia Fox Tree, talked about the important work of our organization. After eating and intermingling amongst ourselves, our attention focused on Evangelina Macias. Her dance offering, “*Nikosokowaiks, My Relatives,*” engaged with her lineage, embodied history, land-body relations, and the trauma of the Indian boarding schools. We were honored to have the presence of her mother who participated in the dance. It was a powerful performance that left all of us stunned. A few couldn’t hold back the tears.

The audience stayed silent for nearly an hour as every movement was slowed to a barely moving pace. This was all inspiring as this was the first time Evangelina presented this phase of her work.

For all of you who attended in person, thank you for the love and support. And mostly, much appreciation to our dear friend ChaeRan for this incredible partnership we have had with Brandeis University over the years, especially for IPD programs. ■

These programs were funded, in part, by a grant from Mass Humanities and the Mass Cultural Council

MCNAA HEATING ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

by Burne Stanley-Peters, Board Member

In 2022, the Mass. Center for Native American Awareness (MCNAA) received a multi-year grant through the Residential Energy Assistance Program. The grant, designed to help eligible median income households, will supplement our Social Assistance Program that assists Native families and Elders in Massachusetts pay or lower their winter heating costs. Payments, through this program, are made directly to the utility companies.



The program, for this heating season, is open through April 2024 or until all funds are expended. So, if you are experiencing temporary financial hardship and need help paying your heat bill, please reach out to Kim or Burne at MCNAA to apply for assistance by requesting an application. We will be happy to help eligible families as long as funds are available.

This is the last season for this grant. Hopefully the program will be offered again in the future and MCNAA will receive funding for another couple years. We will keep you informed. ■

MIDDLESEX & ESSEX COUNTIES TOYS FOR TOTS

by Anthony SkyHawk, Board Member

Once again, MCNAA was able to help provide toys to a number of needy families for the Christmas Holiday. The toys, donated through Middlesex and Essex Toys for Tot Campaign, were essential for many families who were struggling to provide their children with



gifts and toys to ensure they have a good Christmas.

Over the years, MCNAA has received toys from Toys for Tots and provided a number of gifts for our Native constituents to ensure their children had a good Christmas/Nikkomo. Since we have been so successful, we

were listed as a campaign organization for the program for Middlesex and Essex County families. This included responding to requests from both Native and non-Native families who could reach out to us for help through the Program. Although this added a little extra work on our part, this was very rewarding as we were able to help quite a number of families in these counties and beyond.

To ensure we were able to safely get the toys to the families without fear of flu, covid or colds, we put together bags of toys for the various families who requested them and scheduled a day and time for pick up at our office. As we were still social distancing, we asked those who came to pick up the toys to remain in their vehicle and call upon arrival. At that point, we brought down the bags to the parent who was all so thankful. Each had a different story that ranged from a single parent with two children losing her job and having to seek shelter with family members until her situation changes. She wanted to make sure her children had a happy Christmas because she was unable to afford any presents for them. Another was a single, disabled mom who wanted only one gift to have under the tree for her son. We were able to give her four. She was so thankful.

This experience was overwhelmingly rewarding and we see how even small gestures can mean so much to others. ■

*“The mind is a powerful force. It can enslave us or empower us.
It can plunge us into the depths of misery or take us to the heights of ecstasy.
Learn to use the power wisely.”
— David Cuschieri*

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE OFFICE!

by Burne Stanley-Peters, Board Member

* We relaxed our visitor guidelines and have allowed for scheduled visits in the office with a mask. If you'd like to visit and reconnect with us, please e-mail us at mcnaa@aol.com

* We worked on varied administrative tasks that included the following:

- processed membership renewals,
- attended informational webinars,
- explored more grant opportunities and applied to two funders,
- worked on year-end tax receipt letters for monthly donors and for donations that came in that were over \$250,
- responded to general e-mail inquiries, and
- updated our website and face book pages.

* We continued culturally sensitive mentoring, helped with vital resources, as well as provided other supportive services to our college students during the 2023 Fall Semester.

* We continued to assist needy Native families and Elders with food purchases, gasoline for their vehicles, and other utility bills such as electricity, internet, and cell phone service. We also identified and bagged Christmas toys for the children of needy families.

* Responded to requests for guidance and information as well as to many requests from organizations and civic groups for speakers/presenters, especially during October and November.

* Board Member, Dawn Duncan, continues to sit on the Bureau of Substance Abuse Services (BSAS) Community Advisory Board (CAB). Her experience from a program development, policy, and public health perspective makes her the ideal MCNAA Board Member to provide input to this board. As we stated in early 2021, the goal of CAB is primarily 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. They meet regularly every other Wednesday.

* Board Member, Claudia Fox Tree, maintains a seat on Essex County Community Foundation's Racial Equity Committee. The purpose of the Committee, as is described by ECCF, is to advise their staff and trustees in its current and evolving racial equity strategy and hold them accountable for the actions needed to effectively bring about change. ■



UPCOMING VIRTUAL BOOK DISCUSSIONS

Some great news for the beginning of 2024. Board Member, Claudia Fox Tree, will lead two virtual book discussions for the Mass. Center for Native American Awareness (MCNAA).



The first discussion will be on Sunday, January 14, 2024 at 2:00 PM. The book is entitled “Warrior Girl Unearthed” by Angeline Bouley (Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians.)

The second discussion will be held on Sunday, February 18, 2024 at 2:00 PM. The book is entitled “Becoming Kin: An Indigenous Call to Unforgetting the Past and Reimagining Our Future” by Patty Krawe (Anishinaabe/Ukrainian).

For more details on the books and to reserve your spot, visit our web page at mcnaa.org/book-discussion-1. Remember, these book groups are open to all! We hope you’ll join us. ■

MCNAA LEATHER GIVE-AWAY

A few years ago, MCNAA received a donation of good quality leather. We had a “give-away” and gave away a number of rolls as well as used a few rolls to make leather pouch kits for a virtual craft day that we held for youth.

We have a little leather left over, about 10 pieces of soft brown suede as well as 5-6 assorted pieces in different colors. If you are an artisan or crafter and feel you have use for the leather, you are welcome to it. It is offered free of charge to those who are willing to pick it up in Bedford, MA from Advisory Council Member Erin McCormack.

If interested, please contact Erin for more details about the leather and to schedule a pick up day and time. She can be reached at dkkelm@aol.com Thank you. ■

FOR SALE – DONATED NATIVE AMERICAN-STYLE FLUTES

by Burne Stanley-Peters, Board Member

In efforts to help raise funds for our programs, several, basically new Native flutes, in different keys, were donated to MCNAA. (One has been sold leaving three.) They are all from High Spirits Flutes in Arizona. They are all adult-size instruments and also come with an instructional manual if you are a beginner. However, there are also several song books that might be of interest to you if you are proficient in flute playing. Each of these flutes are of very high quality and if you purchase one, you won't be disappointed.

Here's the descriptions and photos of each flute:

Spirit Flute Bass..... Key D minor.....Spanish Cedar

This Spirit Flute is a Traditional Bass flute in the key 'D' minor. It is handcrafted from Spanish Cedar, a softwood that gives the flute a rich bass voice, warm high notes, and the versatility to be played as a contemplative bass flute or a lead instrument.



This 19-inch length flute makes this one of the shortest bass flutes, which allows for the possibility for those with smaller hands to play this deeper-toned flute. It is adorned with 5 Thunderbird nicely carved along the top. The short mouthpiece is convenient for travel, it provides ample back-pressure to accentuate clarity on the higher register notes and minimizes moisture buildup. This flute is valued at \$289 but we will accept \$189 or any reasonable offer.

The Crow Flute, Key A minor.... Ebonized Walnut

The Crow flute is handcrafted from Ebonized domestic Walnut, a hardwood. It is keyed in the key of "A" minor and can also be played in the relative major diatonic scale in the key of "C". The Crow has a very special musical tonal quality because of the Ebonize Walnut wood flute body. This flute is 19 inches long. This flute is valued at \$315 but we will accept \$225 or any reasonable offer.



The Crow flute goes through a time-consuming, multi-step process that involves being ebonized multiple times and then repeatedly sealed with coats of non-toxic oil, to create the final high-gloss look and finish along with an enhanced tonal voice. The flute is then completed with decorative Turquoise cabochons to enhance the natural beauty of the instrument and adding to its character as both a musical instrument and a piece of functional artwork. *NOTE: This photo differs slightly from the actual flute that is for sale. Our donated flute has less turquoise cabochons on the top.*

Signature Hummingbird Flute, Key F#m.....Aromatic Cedar

The 2022 Hummingbird Signature Flute is tuned in the key of 'F#' minor is the newest design in the Hummingbird Signature Series. It can also be played in the relative major diatonic scale in the key of A. The dimensions of the flute are approximately 22 inches in length with a 1-inch (2.5 cm) bore diameter. This beautiful instrument is valued at \$470 but we will accept \$350 or any reasonable offer.



This flute is handcrafted from Aromatic Cedar with a beautifully hand-carved Hummingbird attached atop. Aromatic Cedar was chosen for this flute because of its exceptional tonal qualities, which give the flute a clear, warm, balanced musical voice. The entire flute is adorned with hand carved Hummingbirds and flowers inlaid with abalone shell which was chosen because of its vibrant iridescent color. This is another extremely well crafted flute and is more beautiful in person.

This Signature Series flutes utilizes a unique airflow design that provides exceptional responsiveness and player control, superior amplification, and makes it ideal for a wide range of musical styles. It is designed to be both concert quality musical instruments and functional artwork.

The flutes are housed at our office in Danvers for anyone who is seriously interested in purchasing one (or all) of them. If you'd like to make an appointment to drop by and see them, please e-mail us at mcnaa@aol.com. Conversely, if you'd like to purchase one, based on the photo and description above, please e-mail us with your selection and we'll follow up with you via phone or e-mail. Funds raised from the purchases will go toward MCNAA's programs. We hope some of you will take this great opportunity to own and learn to play a flute or gift one to a loved one. Thank You. ■

MCNAA'S MONTHLY GIVING PROGRAM

The Massachusetts Center for Native American Awareness is a non-profit organization that does not receive consistent grant funding. When we do receive a grant, it's usually for heat assistance which is greatly needed but doesn't help with other program needs such as: scholarships for students; food & essential basic needs for elders and families; cultural programs, social change initiatives; and youth activities.



Additionally, since early 2020, all of our in-person fundraising events, that helped bring in much needed program funds, had to be canceled. Because of this, we felt it necessary to create a monthly giving program to help provide a reliable, steady influx of income. Monthly donations are a sure way to help our organization receive recurring funds on a regular basis and will complement the few small grants we receive.

In the spirit of “paying it forward”, we invite you as well as large, medium, and small businesses, to become a GEM (Give*Every*Month) donor and help make a difference by joining the circle of monthly giving. 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 select “make this a monthly/reoccurring donation.” Thank you. ■