CAIRS Newsletter 2011

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Southeastern American Indian Festival

On December 4, we headed to the Mary C. Okeefe Cultural Center on the Gulf Coast for our first Southeastern American Indian Festival. The festival was sponsored by the Mississippi Arts Commission, Southern Miss College of Arts and Letters on the Gulf Coast and CAIRS. In the photo above, Senora Lynch, from North Carolina, leads Dan Isaac (purple and gold shirt) and Venture Crew, a group of Choctaw social dancers, in the Haliwa-Saponi Robin dance. Gathered around the table watching are the Bogue Homa social dancers led by Perlie Thomas.

(1) Poarch Creek honeysuckle and cane baskets and patchwork (2) Poarch Creek finger-weaving (3) Choctaw tiny basket (4) Houma half-hitch palmetto basket (5) Haliwa-Saponi pottery (6) Houma beaded moccasins. (MORE PHOTOS ON PAGE 6)
Bad things happen. Good can come of it just the same. The Medicine Wheel Garden was vandalized last semester. Some students who were on a treasure hunt went looking for their treasure in our garden and made a huge mess of it in the process. Many of the rocks were tossed about and much of the cardboard that was around the plants and under the mulch forming a weed barrier and moisture retainer for the plants was pulled out and strewn in and around the garden. Fortunately, very few plants were harmed. My children, Kaliq and Kyla, discovered the disaster and reported it to me within just minutes of the vandalism. It was hard to stay calm, to think of what to do--call the campus police, talk to people in the area who may have seen this happen.

My little girl, who works in the garden each week placing the cardboard, pulling weeds, labelling plants and organizing rocks was not calm. She was angry and then sad and then finally exclaimed, “Mom, this will take forever to fix!” But even as she was saying this, people were arriving. The dean of students, Dr. Eddie Hollaway showed up. His assistant, Brooks Moore, was there. The president of the Student Government Association, Kasey Mitchell, introduced herself along with several other members of that student governing body. First one and then another of these folks asked what could be done. There was much to be done! We worked that night on relocating the rocks, replacing the cardboard, uncovering plants and putting down more mulch. By 10 p.m. the garden looked much better.

The following day, the dean of students and the Student Government Association made donations for the garden that enabled us to purchase several hundred pounds of large, beautiful river rock to make spokes for the garden wheel. This was a much-needed addition. Student volunteers from the Student Government Association returned several times to help place the new rocks, lay more cardboard and mulch additional plants. The Southern Miss community made right this wrong and then did more. They made the garden even better. Leland Lewis from Choctaw came, and we had a blessing ceremony for the garden. Kasey and I spread tobacco. The students meant no real harm to our garden. They were looking for their treasure and didn’t recognize that they were standing in ours.

We don’t know what may be someone else’s treasure. Maybe these folks just saw a grassy area, or a grassy area with some rocks, or a grassy area with some rocks and plants. To many of us, though, this Medicine Wheel Garden is a treasure. It’s our treasure. For some of us the Gulf of Mexico is a treasure, not the oil but the waterways that provide a livelihood, the land that provides shelter, the plants that provide healing. It’s where Houma ancestors are buried. It’s a treasure. And where some see just a pile of dirt, some pottery shards, interesting arrow heads or old bones, others see the very place where the first people of their kind emerged into the outer world, where they as a people were born. The Choctaws see Nanih Waiya, their mother mound. It is their treasure.

There are lots of lessons at college. Some are about math and English. Others are about how to be respectful of one another, of our differences, of our treasures. Still others are about how to make right what we’ve wronged, about how to go beyond just reparations and make improvements. Our students here at Southern Miss learn many important lessons.

~Tammy Greer
Who’s Who in the Southeastern American Indian Tribes: Sonny Bell

Sonny Bell has worked at the C.H. Nash Museum at Chucalissa in Memphis, Tennessee, for 10 years. When I met him, he was behind the counter taking care of the needs and wants of curious museum store customers. When museum guests were invited into a demonstration room with musical instruments, Sonny moved from behind the counter and took his place at the powwow drum. He seemed comfortable there as well. I asked him where he learned powwow songs, and it turns out that Sonny is part of the drum group Shoti Ikbi, which means pottery maker in Choctaw, so named because Grady John, the resident potter at Chucalissa for some years, was the grandfather of the seven men who formed the group. Sonny has other talents as well. He worked with his dad, Cubert Bell Sr., learning how to make blowguns, spears and hatchets. Wood Bell, who was a tour guide at Chucalissa for 30 years, taught Sonny social dancing and social dance chanting. He’s had some great teachers, and, as is the Native way, he’s incorporated those teachings into his own life, into what he does beyond Chucalissa, and teaches others what he has learned. Sonny is part of the West Tennessee Choctaw Indian Social Dance Group.

Sonny’s wife, Maegan John, is part of the effort to maintain the Choctaw traditions as well. Maegan learned pottery making from her father, Grady, and beadwork from her mother, Betty John. She makes Choctaw doll necklaces with seed beads, as well as beaded collars, to sell at the museum. Sonny and Maegan are passing their heritage on to their seven children—Gabrielle John (age 14), Cubert Bell III (12), Charity Bell (10), Savannah Bell (8), Joseph Bell (5), Angel Bell (3) and Noah Bell (1) at their residence on the Chucalissa site. I can’t wait to see who among them is going to be the artist, the singer, the dancer, the storyteller, the potter, the bead-worker, the craftsperson. I can’t wait to see.

Sonny Bell demonstrates powwow drumming to visitors at the Chucalissa Museum as part of an exhibit of musical instruments from several continents.

In the background of this article and below are pots created by Laura Soloman, who learned traditional pot-making from the late Grady John.
Our Mother the Earth:

For some of us the new year brings much celebration, much joy and much-needed resolutions. For many, the new year is a time of renewal. We may vow to eat more healthy foods or exercise more. We may promise our loved ones that we will be more available, more involved, a better mate, a better parent. We mark the new year; we notice; we celebrate. Historically, the Southeastern American Indians marked their new year during late summer or early fall, when the corn ripened and was ready for harvest. The Green Corn Ceremony was celebrated with community gatherings, fasting and then feasting, ceremonies, and much of the same revelry as many celebrate the contemporary new year. So it may sound odd that some of our Native people are calling for a return of the Green Corn Ceremony in this modern world. It’s not the need for more festivities that has spurred this movement to reintroduce our summer renewal ceremony. The Green Corn ceremony had something that is not prominent in most modern-day New Year’s celebrations. It was during the Green Corn Ceremony that the hearth fires were extinguished, grievances were forgiven and community life, more than just symbolically, began anew. It is this focus on forgiveness, on letting go of grudges, on our ability as human beings to change, to give one another a second chance that is missing in many contemporary New Year’s celebrations but very much-needed in so many communities today. For many of our elders, for those who are our tradition keepers, the return of the Green Corn Ceremony seems long overdue.

Green Corn Ceremony

Cook’s Corner: Bunaha (Shuck Bread)

2 cups of cornmeal
1 tsp baking soda
1 ½ cup hot water
1 tsp salt
Boil (10 minutes) corn shucks
Mix dry ingredients, add water until mixture is stiff and can be handled easily. Form balls with mixture about the size of a tennis ball and wrap in corn shucks that have been boiled in water for 10 minutes. Tie in middle with corn shuck string. Drop balls into a deep pot of boiling water. Cover and cook 1 hour. Store leftovers in refrigerator. To reheat, moisten shuck and microwave.

Add ½ cup cooked beans to recipe for a variation.
What’s Going on in the Southeast

Mississippi: February 22. 11th Annual ECHO Performing Arts Festival. 6:30 p.m. Bennett Auditorium, Southern Miss Campus, Hattiesburg, Miss.

Mississippi: February 22. 11th Annual ECHO Performing Arts Festival. 7:00 p.m. Arena at Golden Moon, Choctaw, Miss.

Florida: February 18-20. Thunder on The Beach Powwow. Indian River County Fairgrounds, Vero Beach, Fla. 772.567.1579 deedee1579@aol.com or http://www.thunderonthebeachpowwow.net


Florida: March 4-6. Thundering Spirit Family Powwow. Renninger’s Market Hwy 441, Mount Dora, Fla. 352.636.4271 or 352.589.0045 thunderspiritfam@yahoo.com or www.thunderingspiritfamily.com (Tony Ledford)

Texas: March 5. UTA 16th Annual Benefit Powwow. Bluebonnet Ballroom University Center, Arlington, Texas. 817.832.6236 dfoldoe@sbcglobal.net http://www.uta.edu/studentorgs/nasa_aises/ (Debra Foldoe)

Texas: March 5. 2nd Annual Gainesville Student Benefit. 2201 South I-35, Gainesville, Texas. 972.984.0854 tashby@gainesvilleisd.org (Terry Ashby)


Georgia: March 26-27. Yahoolia Spring Powwow. 891 South Chestatee Street Dahlonega, Ga. 706.864.5081 yahoolacherokee2@aol.com http://yahoolacherokeemuseum.com/rendevous.htm (Johnny Chattin)


Texas: April 2-3. Big Spring Powwow. 1001 Birdwell Lane, Big Spring, Texas. 432.263.3255 rddowning@yahoo.com powwowbigspring.net (Robert Downing)

Tennessee: April 2-3. Powwow on the River - Honoring Our Veterans. 1st Tennessee Pavilion (aka Chatta Market), 1826 Reggie White, Chattanooga, Tenn. 423.240.7270 NASofTN@aol.com

Georgia: April 7-9. Cherokee of Georgia Spring Powwow. 110 Cherokee Way, St. George, Ga. 904.446.7223 fmmcgahee@bellsouth.net (Redhawk McGahee)

Florida: April 8-10. Red Eagle Lodge 11th Annual Intertribal Powwow. U.S. Highway 41 South, Floral City, Fla. 352.400.5644 (Pansey Grey Eagle) www.redeaglelodge.org or pansey57@sprint.blackberry.net

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Southeastern American Indian Festival (Continued)

What’s Going on in the Southeast (Continued)

Florida: April 8-10. Chamber’s Farm Spring Family Powwow, Chamber’s Farm off CR 315, Ft. McCoy, Fla. Chambersfarm@hotmail.com www.chambersfarm.org 706.983.9367 513.464.1746 (Dan Berke)


Mississippi: April 15-16. Southern Miss Golden Eagles Intertribal Powwow. Chain Park, Hattiesburg, Miss. 601-466-0948 tammy.greer@usm.edu

Tennessee: April 15-17. Kawani Intertribal Powwow. 9891 Ladd’s Cove Road off I-24 exit 143, South Pittsburg, Tenn. 931-529-1557 moonwillow2012@yahoo.com dreamcatcher40f@yahoo.com (Jimmy Wiseowl)

Louisiana: April 15-17. 44rd Annual LIHA (LA Indian Heritage Association) Powwow. Lamar-Dixon Expo Center, Gonzales, La. 504.367.1375 or www.liha-news.com or djpm2@cox.net

Alabama: April 29-May 1. 11th Annual Cherokee River Homecoming Fest. 1075 County Road 67, Moulton, Ala. 205.221.3873 kbagwell1@gmail.com http://cric2010.weebly.com (Cecil Brill)


Tennessee: May 21-22. Powwow on the Mountain: Honoring All Survivors. The Cumberland County Complex at the ball field next to fairground, Crossville, Tenn. 931.787.0744 (Mary)


Let’s Get Educated: Muskogean Word Scramble

Muskogean languages are a family of languages spoken by American Indian tribes primarily in the Southeastern U.S. Koasati (Coushatta), Creek (Muskogee), Mikasuki (Miccosukee), Chickasaw, Choctaw and Houma are derivatives of the Muskogean parent language. Unscramble letters on left to make Muskogean words that correspond to English words on right.

1. L H M A O O A K  ____________________________  RED PEOPLE
2. H O A O M C A  ____________________________  RED PANTHER
3. H T T A E C N O A  ____________________________  GRAY SKUNK
4. B A M W A T I A  ____________________________  WOOD BENCH
5. S B A H O N E  ____________________________  GREY WOLF
6. U B E X O N E  ____________________________  STINKY
7. N O A P L A  ____________________________  COTTON
8. T A K A M O O  ____________________________  RADIANT WATER
9. S U K U P S  ____________________________  BABY
10. S A B A L U A Y H  ____________________________  TADPOLE
11. S Q K L A A U U H  ____________________________  CRAWFISH HOLE
12. L A H T E H C I T A L A  ____________________________  PALMETTO RIVER
13. U A L H C T  ____________________________  FOX
14. S H I M G O N O I T  ____________________________  WAR CHIEF
15. P O L E U T  ____________________________  BLACK GUM
16. G O U E B  T I T C O H  ____________________________  BIG CREEK
17. U B O E G  O H A M  ____________________________  RED CREEK
18. G I M N O P O I  ____________________________  PROPHETIC CHIEF
19. L A F C A H A T A Y A  ____________________________  LONG RIVER
20. S H A O T U M A K  ____________________________  RED WARRIOR
21. G I M O T B E B E  ____________________________  COFFIN MAKER
22. T A T I C E H A H B U T  ____________________________  CORNMEAL RIVER
23. H A M A L O H U C  ____________________________  RED FOX
24. H A W P T A N A K A O Y  ____________________________  DIVIDED LAND
25. H I N N A  Y I A W A  ____________________________  LEANING HILL


What’s Going on in the Southeast (Continued)

North Carolina: July 8-10. Strong Sun Powwow. Tanglewood Park, Clemmons, N.C.  
http://nearriverdwellers.com/

North Carolina: August 26-27. Festival of Native Peoples, Cherokee, N.C.  800.438.1601

Tennessee: October 1-2. Cumberland Plateau 10th Annual Powwow. Putnam County Fairgrounds, Cookeville, Tenn.  iicpowwows@yahoo.com 931-544-4908 (Linda ) 931-372-0495 (Carol)

North Carolina: October 4-8. 99th Annual Cherokee Indian Fair, Cherokee, N.C.  800.438.1601

Alabama: October 9-10. Oka Kapassa-Return to Cold Water. Tuscumbia, Ala.  800.344.0783
On the Red Road

Veteran’s Day at Choctaw is a big event. This year, the Veteran’s Day parade commenced with the dedication of a beautiful memorial wall for Choctaw veterans located at Veteran’s Park. A two-day powwow followed the parade.

Okla i maya moma hoki. We have remained.

In Loving Memory

Our dear friend Juanitsa Lewis recently passed away, and we will miss her dearly. Juanitsa was a great Southern Miss fan, regularly attending football games and supporting our powwows. Even with health concerns, Juanitsa was always ready to have fun teasing Leeland, joking with GEIS students, being an active participant in all that was going on, and sharing her unique ideas enthusiastically and unselfishly. Chi hullo li, Juanitsa.

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