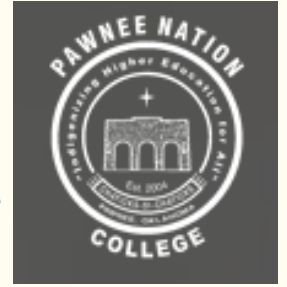


PAWNEE NATION COLLEGE



SPRING
2023

Style
EDITION



MESSAGE FROM PNC'S STACI BURNS

My name is Staci Burns, and I am honored to accept the position of Acting President at Pawnee Nation College; effective January 1st, 2023. I have worked for Pawnee Nation College for almost 15 Years, and I was more than willing to take on the responsibilities of PNC President as we prepare and position the College for an incoming President.

PNC is a special place, and presently in an amazing position with a strong Board of Trustees, positive support from the Pawnee

Business Council, along with a strong committed team of full-time staff and faculty with strong partnerships. The College has a great opportunity to become an accredited Tribal College in Oklahoma. I want more than anything to see PNC achieve accreditation, and I know now is the time to move forward and start the framework to reach this goal! PNC currently has projects, grants, and partnerships with Oklahoma State University (OSU), Nebraska Indian Community College (NICC), and Meridian Technology Center (MTC) along with awarded grant

projects with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Department of Education (DOE), and the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) for the Tribal Broadband Connectivity Program.

The most important part of PNC is the students, and it has been amazing being a part of this wonderful opportunity and watching each one of our students exceed their goals and achieve great accomplishments.

FEATURED ARTICLES

PNC FACULTY SPOTLIGHT

Let me introduce you to Dr. Felipe Chavez-Ramirez, he is a new addition to the Pawnee Nation College campus. He also serves as the Natural Science Coordinator. Dr. Felipe moved from Houston, Texas and has an 18-year-old son that is about to start his own life's journey. He has traveled between many different countries including China and Australia. In China, he was asked to share his research on whooping cranes and endangered species management and planning. In Australia, he was asked to help trap and mark Brolga, an endangered crane. He helped a student design trapping and tagging methods to study their movements. Dr. Felipe also holds a technical degree in forestry and specializes in birds.

Dr. Felipe has been teaching for 30 years and he is in his second semester here at PNC, where two gardening classes are being offered. The fall course is an introduction to gardening, while the spring course is full gardening. He also teaches Introduction to natural resources and Tai Chi. Dr Felipe shared that he has been doing Tai Chi for many years and finds it is relaxing and it helps you get moving. Cooking is also a segment in the gardening classes, once the class figures out what type of vegetables and herbs they want to grow, Dr. Felipe shows students ways to prepare and cook them once harvested. The way he conveys his ideas, and his knowledge is clear, concise, and he imparts his wisdom in a way that keeps you interested in the subject at hand.

A tour was given of the grounds where Dr. Felipe has started to take back some of the land for the native prairie. How the land is now is not the way it used to be, it is now mainly Johnson grass with a small amount of Bermuda grass mixed in and the native plants only make up two percent of what was here before. The soil on the land is being prepared now by solarization and Dr. Felipe has many plans for students to work in the soil, to learn what they are working with, and to cultivate the mindset of gardening. The first step that was given about gardening is to find out what you like to eat and then start from there.



The similarity in the colonization is not lost while conversing during the interview. The land and the Pawnee people have both been colonized and this brought up the subject of the Pawnee language. Dr. Felipe has talked to those around the Pawnee Nation about the language and wants to integrate it into his curriculum by labeling the items and different plants with the Pawnee words. This is a way that Dr. Felipe shows respect to the land and to the Pawnee people.

When asked how he would like to be thought of by his students, Dr. Felipe stated, "I would rather be inspiring than impressive" and when asked for his favorite part of teaching, he stated, "The best part is when I encounter students much years later doing well in their profession that they pursued and still making a difference." I know that this student will be signing up for a class next semester. Which one should it be?



FEATURED ARTICLES

ADVENTURES IN TRAVELING

Have you ever thought about traveling to Costa Rica? Where is Costa Rica? Costa Rica, a rugged, rain forested Central American country, is sandwiched between Nicaragua and Panama, and is surrounded by the ocean on two sides. It is known for its beaches, volcanoes, and the variety of life in the local ecosystem. Marcella Stephenson from the Pawnee Nation College campus has not only thought about it but has made the trip this past month.

Marcella, also known as Marcy, made the trip as part of her educational journey to receive her master's degree in international agriculture emphasizing education (MIAP). Marcy is the Admissions and Recruitment director at Pawnee Nation College and stayed in Costa Rica for three weeks to learn about sustainable development goals and to complete different work studies. Marcy harvested butterflies, milked goats, and made goat cheese among other tasks given to her on the trip. She said, "the pollinators are one of my things," when referring to harvesting the butterflies. She described some of the process and shared that their life span was only six weeks, and we were both in awe of these wonderful little creatures.

The travel time from Pawnee, Oklahoma to Costa Rica was five hours by air and the road time would have been 52 hours (about 2 days) by car. The temperature stayed in the 90's but felt great according to Marcy. She expressed that the colors in Costa Rica are vibrant, neon and the natural colors pop and make you take notice, as compared to the deep greens that Oklahoma are known for. Marcy said the dollar is equivalent to .60 cents and that when you were on the trails you had to pay .50 cents to use the restrooms.

On one of her adventures on her birthday, she went river rafting on the Pacuare river, and the tour guide's name was Albert, Albert was her late husband's name. Marcy shared the guide was cool and she told him about her Albert. During the river rafting she saw sloths, monkeys, eagles, iguanas, and lizards. Marcy talked about the paddling being intense at times and when they were in calmer waters and were able to swim it was a wonderful feeling.



The trip to Costa Rica was one that Marcy said she would take again and that seeing the way locals take pride in their homes, have gardens, and take care of their areas is inspiring. There are compost areas where you can take what you need or leave compost for others. The fresh fruit, the way the parks are the center of town usually placed next to a church, and the way the people congregate in the parks together to share their time are some of what Marcy shared and beauty was found. In Costa Rica, their motto is "pura vida" which means to live your best life and that is what Marcy is doing.



FEATURED ARTICLES

PAWNEE NATION DIVISION SPOTLIGHT - T.E.R.O.

In December I was asked to attend a T.E.R.O. conference with my husband in Las Vegas, he felt it would be a fun time to get away and revamp before Christmas. It was decided we would drive so we could spend the additional time together and get to see some of the country. The drive was enjoyable and there was a side trip to the Grand Canyon where we got to witness the splendor that is the big hole in the ground that is unexplainable. While we there exploring, we came across a choir from South Africa, and we were able to witness them sing a beautiful, heartfelt song to their tour guide. As I was listening to the choir, I imagined what they would sound like singing with a Pawnee drum and this made my heart happy and ready for what lay ahead of us.

T.E.R.O. stands for Tribal Employment Rights Office and they are the equivalent to the E.E.O.C. (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission) on sovereign lands. T.E.R.O.'s platform this year is war on trauma, the leading cause of death for construction workers is suicide and Native Americans make up 80 percent of that death rate. Unspoken trauma has been shown to be a catalyst for that percentage and T.E.R.O. wants to try to combat that by offering counseling, support, and open communications between those employers and employees.

I found the information that was shared about T.E.R.O. hitting close to home, I was suicidal for many years because I never spoke about the different traumas that started early in my life, and the turning point for me was getting sick with seven different autoimmune diseases over a course of a few years. I worked for 911 for ten years for a large county and had to quit working due to illness thus I could no longer hide in my work. I was in a dark place for many years and then I broke my ankle (trimalleolar fracture), somehow, it put my autoimmune into remission. I was able to move again even with constant pain in my ankle, it was controllable, and I started taking back my life on my own terms.



On the last day of the conference my husband invited me to lunch with him and a commissioner from his T.E.R.O. board, the conversation that was had was thought provoking and inspiring to me in many ways. The commissioner is a Pawnee elder, and he shared some of his traumas with me and we conversed in a way I never imagined being able to do with a non family tribal member. My husband was talking about some of the information shared and used the verbiage silence or violence and this resonated. Silence and violence were always my reactions to triggering events. At the end of lunch, the Pawnee elder wanted to know what our battle plan is, and that is where we are now. What is our battle plan? How do we stop the generational trauma? How do we learn to stop the silence in a good way?

There IS Help

**Text TALK to 741-741 to text with a
trained crisis counselor from the
Crisis Text Line for free, 24/7**

SAMHSA Treatment Referral
Hotline (Substance Abuse)
1-800-662-HELP (4357)

Veterans Crisis Line
Send a text to 838255

Email:
988lifeline.org

Call: 988

afsp.org

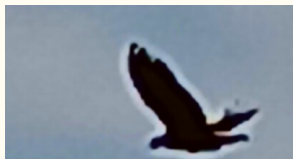
FEATURED ARTICLES

PAWNEE'S MOURNER'S FEAST CEREMONY

Today, I interviewed the head Nasharo (Chief) of the Pawnee Tribe his name is Patrick Leading Fox, Sr., and he answered questions that I had about our tribal burial ceremony and mourner's feast. The interview was held at Pawnee Lake on a windy day, watching the eagles fly and listening to nature while we spoke of our Pawnee ways. There are four bands of the Pawnee Tribe, Chaui, Skidi, Kitkehahki, and Pitahawirata, and each band performed their own burial ceremony. Nasharo Leading Fox said, "It's a sacred thing, our way is hard, but this is closure for the family, a last meal."

Nasharo Leading Fox is the head nasharo and comes from the Skidi band. He was voted in for his first term in 1996, with each term being four years. When asked if he would continue, he stated, "as long as I am voted in." He explained that Pawnee way was to mourn for four days, this gives the spirit time to say goodbye to those they are leaving behind. In those four days, their lost loved ones watch over the body of their loved one, while different support groups in the tribe feed the family.

Once the arrangements have been made for the funeral of the lost loved one, a basket of groceries is gathered. The basket is then taken by a family representative to give to one of the men in the tribe who can perform the mourner's feast ceremony. In the tribe there are certain men that can prepare the feast for the family, and this is passed down from generation to generation from father to son (uncle to nephew is also considered father to son-Pawnee way). The cost of food is covered by the family, as this is considered the last meal and the last time, they will be in the presence of their loved one. This is a way to honor their memory by feeding mourners and giving closure to continue their daily lives.



During the feast, certain guidelines have been passed down that include no speaking, staying seated once the ceremony has started, and the ceremony must occur directly after the burial. These guidelines help ensure that your loved one's journey is done in a good way and that a blessing will occur for the family. The four bands had some differences in the ceremonies, but these guidelines stood for all four bands. The preparer of the feast, his second, and men of the tribe serve those that are there, and a serving is made for the lost loved one. The second preparer places the serving back into the ground in a clay bowl and then it is taken outside and buried symbolizing that their soul is released to the next part of their journey. Following the meal there may be a giveaway and this is when the family gives gifts to those that helped them during their challenging times. In traditional times, the Pawnee did not have giveaways; however, when different tribes married into the tribe, some of those traditions integrated with the Pawnee way.

This is the last time you are to mourn your loved one and it is not a painless process, but it helps give closure and according to Nasharo Pat, "you really have to believe in it." Faith is the key in many areas of our lives and to have it be part of our ceremonial goodbye is a good way and one that makes me proud to be Pawnee. Aho.

FEATURED ARTICLES

TIPS WHEN MAKING EMERGENCY (911) CALLS

Emergency calls are made by dialing 911 and the person you speak to when you call is tasked with helping you get through one of the hardest days in your life. When making these calls always try to remember to breathe and to focus on your location. The location is the main information needed to get help to you as quickly as possible; so, make sure you know the address you are at or if there is a landline available make the call from that line. A landline is a wired phone line in a residence or business, and it generates the location in a more accurate way than a cell phone. Cell phones are amazing tools, and they need to be updated with your residential address periodically, this will help if you are immobilized and not able to communicate with finding a lead to who you are and where you are from for the 911 operators. Remember location, location, location is the key to getting help to someone in need.

Another way to be prepared is to teach your children how to dial 911, give a good location, and inform them that public service is there to help when they need it. Children need to be made aware that the 911 system is one that does not have time for prank or fraudulent calls and that the person on the other side of the line will do what they can to help anytime a call is made. Children having to call 911 is not a normal event, however, when they do have to make the call preparation helps stem some of the anxieties that can come with an emergency.

Details matter when making calls because of the scene safety concerns for the responding units to an emergency. Emergency telecommunicators are trained to ask certain questions and in an order that is time efficient so that help arriving is not slowed down by the call taking process. Time is key in all emergencies and if you can focus on the call taker and getting the information to them that will help alleviate some of the stress that is involved in emergencies. Always try to focus on staying as calm as you can and that all people need help one time or another in their lifetime.

A few examples of emergency calls are fire, traffic accidents with injury or blocking traffic, shootings, stabbings, robberies, breathing problems, or a medical issue needing immediate care, and remember when in doubt call them out. 911 agencies have non-emergency lines as well and saving that number in your cellphone is always helpful if you ever need to make a call that is time sensitive but not an emergency.



INSPIRATIONAL WORDS

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The voice you can find,
The books you read,
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NICC cares,
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FEATURED ARTICLES

"SERVANT OF THE PEOPLE' SHARES HER KNOWLEDGE OF TRADITIONAL FOOD SOURCES

Community leaders come in all forms—from young go-getters to seasoned professionals, and everything in between. The one thing they all have in common is their dedication and passion for making their hometowns the best places they can be, and helping their neighbors in whatever ways they can.

LaVonne Snake of Winnebago, Nebraska, epitomizes every part of being a true leader and is changing lives in northeast Nebraska Native communities. She teaches classes at Nebraska Indian Community College (NICC) on edible foraging of wild plants, nutrition, and culinary know-how. In addition, she leads a Baking for Business workshop series, a partnership between the Center for Rural Affairs and NICC.

She grew up around food and cooking at family gatherings, and her passion for the culinary arts started when she was young. She took her interest to the next level by moving to Minneapolis to attend culinary arts school to become a gourmet chef. Her experience there opened her eyes and exposed her to the many spectrums of the world of food.

"I trained under a chef whose restaurant had menu items from all over the world, and customers could order \$100 bottles of wine," said LaVonne. "But, at the same time, my mother and sister worked and cooked at Indian survival schools in the Twin Cities. They told me stories about kids coming to school just so they could eat. That really affected me, seeing such prosperity on one side, then seeing members of my own community struggling. I couldn't come to terms with it."

LaVonne was there for her father as he struggled with his health and faced the hardships of dialysis. She also witnessed other family members battle health issues, herself included, as a diabetic. LaVonne wanted to pass along her knowledge to the people in her community so they could not only survive, but thrive.

"I realized what we really needed was our traditional food," she said. "Twenty years ago I went back to school, and I set up a research model to gather data. That's why I know we need to pass along traditional knowledge—the answer is in the food."

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Feature photos: LaVonne was presented with the Rural Community Champion Award and a Native star quilt on Feb. 24, 2023, at NICC in Macy. Pictured from left are Kristine Flyinghawk, Native communities manager; Sandra Renner, Farm and Community director; LaVonne; and Angelina Magerl, community associate and LaVonne's daughter. | Photo by Kylie Kai

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Through her research, LaVonne found that many of our natural food sources are contaminated, and she's doing her part to educate those around her. For the past several years, LaVonne has brought her findings to the extension classes she teaches for the community at NICC, as well as to the rotating schedule of classes for the college students.

FEATURED ARTICLES

"SERVANT OF THE PEOPLE' SHARES HER KNOWLEDGE OF TRADITIONAL FOOD SOURCES - CONTINUED

"We need to make our traditional food clean again," she said. "'Forever chemicals' are now in every fresh water source in the U.S.—lakes, ponds, streams, and rivers. I want to address that with my people, and return to a Native diet. I don't want to recommend eating contaminated things, I want them to eat and grow clean foods. I want to teach them about our carbon footprint, so we can have clean food and water."

In addition to teaching about traditional foods and gardening, LaVonne tries to add in different aspects of ethnobotany—the study of how people of a particular culture and region make use of indigenous, or native, plants— to her courses. She is also working on a beekeeping project on the NICC campuses in Macy and Santee, Nebraska.

"As we've been trying to raise fruit trees on campus, I realized beekeeping is an important contribution to the success of that part of the garden," said LaVonne.

Along with her colleagues, she is working on designating a place for an apiary on both campuses, as well as tending to a prairie restoration project that has been ongoing for the past 12 to 15 years.

LaVonne enjoys her work, and hopes her students attending NICC and from the community get more than educational knowledge from her classes and workshops.

"I just want people to realize their part in everything," she said. "That they are part of everything, and know their part in it, and to take some kind of forward action in that."

Because of her work with nutrition education, and her passion for promoting educational opportunities in her community, LaVonne was chosen to receive the 2022 Center for Rural Affairs Rural Community Champion Award.

This award is given to LaVonne for making extraordinary contributions in building engagement within her own communities around nutrition education and food sovereignty.

"LaVonne offers her skills and traditional knowledge to all with a humble spirit," said Kristine Flyinghawk, Native communities manager with the Center. "She demonstrates living virtuously through her teaching, whether it be students in her classes, workshop attendees, or other community events. Her passion to help community members and students make lifestyle changes through nutrition and living through Mother Earth is evident in all she does."

LaVonne's mother, Laura Whitewing, is a founding staff member of the Center. Growing up, LaVonne says she was exposed to her mother's work, and learned the importance of working together to accomplish goals. And while she feels commercial ag practices have much to do with current food source contamination issues, she does what she can to collaborate and cooperate with those around her to make the situation better, one step at a time.

"I follow my mother's example," she said. "Sometimes we have to keep focused on our goal and set aside our personal feelings to offer the services we want to provide and to make sure they get accomplished."

Her family and its history factors into everything LaVonne has been able to do for the people around her. She is grateful to them for guiding her to where she is today.

"I want to recognize my mother and grandmother for teaching me about food, food sources, and growing foods," she said. "My father taught me to be a servant to the people. In my Tribe, I'm a member of the Snake Clan. In my position, we are servants to our people, but also, on the other side, we can ask anyone for help. There's always that balance, that equity there. And I don't think of myself as just a servant to someone. I am part of all of this. In my Tribe, in my place, that is part of our teaching, to be that humble servant."



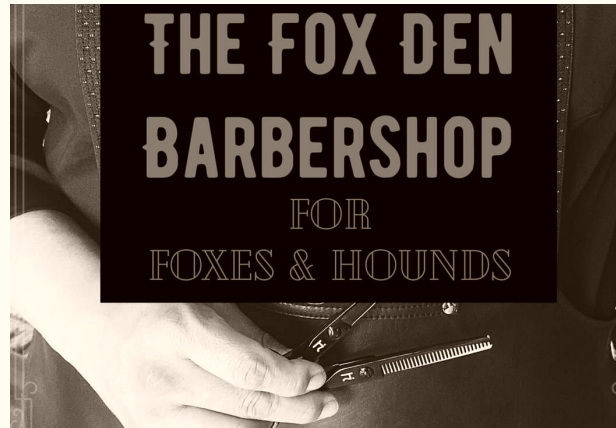
FEATURED ARTICLES

LOCAL BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT - THE FOX DEN BARBERSHOP

Have you ever met a stylish, modern barber? Well, I have and let me tell you what, it was a cool experience, and I would like to introduce him now. Gilbert Beard is his name, and he is the owner of The Fox Den Barbershop here in Pawnee, Oklahoma. He is a Pawnee tribal member and serves on the Nasharo (Chief) council. The barber shop is the newest native owned business to open and has been operating for three months. Gilbert has plans on continuing to update the building with the landlords help and his appointments stay booked with a 45-minute time slot. Gilbert shared that he started working in the industry professionally in 2013 and he started cutting hair at the age of 16.

Gilbert, who is also known as Gib, is a husband, father, and musician. His Pawnee name is Kiwaku Rahiraskawari, which translates to Fox Roaming Under The Vault Of The Heavens In The Lead, and Gilbert, stated, "The name belonged to my great grandfather, Albin Leading Fox. It was given to me in a Native American Church style naming ceremony by my Tiwacirikis (uncle) Steven Moore." Gib serves as the Skidi Nasharo (Chief) and has lived in Pawnee for many years and is married to Dana Beard, who serves as a nurse for IHS and they have two children, Cash and Libby.

When he talked about his music, in that deep, baritone voice, he mentioned that he still does fundraisers for the Red Dirt Relief Fund, a fund that helps struggling musicians during challenging times with medical bills and/or living expenses during their times of need. Gib has a natural demeanor when he performs music, and he makes it look effortless. At times, he is reminiscent of old country singers like Johnny Cash and Trace Adkins. When he has a customer in his chair it is almost like watching him perform on stage. He has a natural charisma, and his craft matters to him, thus making the customer look and feel good.



The Nasharo (Chief) council is also a busy part of Gib's life and his service to his people shows in the ways he gives his time to those who are in need. The Nasharo council serves the people with eligibility and enrollment policies and procedures. Gib serves as Head Nasharo (Chief) for the Skidi, Wolf band of the Pawnee Tribe and the challenges facing these men are not enviable. As they are trying to solve the issues in these modern times of the Pawnee bloodlines that are depleting and the Pawnee ways that are in jeopardy of being lost. This is the battle faced by the Nasharo council and the answers are not easy to find. Gib broke down what a barber does and what equipment that he uses. He explained that barbers are trained in head type, hair textures, and what styles would work for those different types. He also broke down the differences in the services that a barber offers as opposed to a cosmetologist and the differences in the training. Barbers are craftsmen when it comes to the haircuts they give to their customers. The amount of meticulous care that is focused on each cut is thought through and at times a work of art. Gib takes the same amount of care in everything he does for his family, his Pawnee people, and customers. His future remains bright, his course unknown with anything being possible.



FEATURED ARTICLES

TRIBAL GOVERNMENT HISTORY IS TOPIC AT LEWIS AND CLARK

Vanessa Hamilton, extension coordinator for the Macy campus of the Nebraska Indian Community College, was the featured speaker at the annual Native American Artifact Show at the MRB-Lewis and Clark Visitor Center on Saturday, March 4. Hamilton, who is a member of the Omaha tribe, used personal experiences and family history to illustrate her topic, "The History of Indian Tribal Government." She discussed tribal rolls, which are a family history of the different members of the tribe; the Dawes Allotment, which regulated land rights on native lands; tribal entrepreneurship; tribal constitutions; and the history of Indian boarding schools.



The Nebraska City News Press

photo by : Julie Davis

MOVIE REVIEW - THE ENGLISH

The English a movie series starring Emily Blunt as Lady Cordelia Locke, Chaske Spencer as Eli Whipp, and other well-known actors is a beautifully written western that centers on an English woman who deals with her own life's traumas and finds a way to get revenge for the wrong that was done to her (like any good western should). On the other side of the coin, Eli Whipp, a Pawnee scout that has lost his family and his place in the world, wants to find land he can homestead in Nebraska since he served in the Army and is now "free" from his Army time.



Chaske Spencer as Eli Whipp

The conversation that Eli has with one of the fellow soldiers makes it clear to Eli that once he is gone from the Army, he is no longer one of them and to be careful, basically he breaks it down for Eli to not forget his place in the civilian world. These types of conversations in the series show a sense of realness between the different characters and a limited mutual respect.

Lady Cordelia and Eli meet early in the series and travel together learning about each other's journeys. Their story unravels and the magic that is in their stories comes together in a web of brutal violence, hate, greed, jealousy, and love. It is not a happy or true story; however, it makes you think about how your own ancestors would have survived during those times. The Pawnee history is true that is in the series and to see it on the small screen in living color is beyond words. The way Eli's character was dressed and the way he spoke reminded me of different men in the modern-day tribe and to see that on the screen was everything and yet not enough. On one part of their journey, they encounter a female Native character, and they join forces and during the fight she gives her battle cry (lulululu is what we call it these days) and Eli responds, and it is one of the best parts of the series.

The Pawnee language is also featured during different parts of the series and to hear a non-native woman say, "I cherish you" in Pawnee and to say it with such care and respect is heartwarming. The Pawnee language in modern times has had issues with surviving since the boarding school's era and it is being taught now in local schools and through video series. At the end of the series, Eli tells Lady Cordelia he cherishes her in Pawnee and that is what I feel for this series. I cherish it and I would recommend The English to anyone who likes westerns, strong female leads (yes, please!), or an original story of what could have happened.

FEATURED ARTICLES

ABOUT BENJAMIN VICTOR



"A gift from God" is how Benjamin Victor describes his ability to create spectacular works of art. Benjamin joined the ranks of Michelangelo, Bernini, and French by receiving his first large commission at only 23 years old. At age 26, he became the youngest artist ever to have a sculpture in our Nation's foremost collection, the National Statuary Hall in the United States Capitol. In 2019, he became the only living artist to have three works in Statuary Hall. Art critics and organizations, including the National Sculpture Society in New York City, continue to recognize the aesthetic and conceptual integrity of Benjamin's artwork. His passion and drive clearly show in each of his unique and profound creations. With expressive features, exquisite detail, and thought provoking content, the work of Benjamin Victor is sure to take its place among the great masterpieces of art.



Ongpatonga, nicknamed the "big elk" was the chief of the Omaha tribe which was primarily located near the junction of the Ohio and Wabash rivers, near present day Cincinnati, Ohio. Big Elk earned a reputation as a warrior when he was very young, primarily in skirmishes against the Pawnee tribe. Big Elk, who had gained a reputation for fairness in making decisions, became the principal chief of the Omaha tribe. Afterward, the Euro-Americans began to pass through Omaha Territory. In 1821 and 1837, he traveled to Washington, D.C., to negotiate treaties and became a spellbinding orator. He continued to lead the Omaha Indians until he died of fever in 1846. He was buried in Bellevue, Nebraska at Elk Hill, but to the Omaha, called Onpontonga Xiathon, meaning "the Place Where Big Elk Is Buried".



FEATURED ARTICLES

CHIEF BIG ELK SCULPTURE ARTIST BENJAMIN VICTOR INTERVIEW

Benjamin Victor is among the most celebrated living American sculptors today. He received his first large commission at just 23 years of age and is the only living artist to have three pieces on display in the National Statuary Hall in the nation's capital.

A conversation with Omaha Nation member John Pappan was the genesis of the statue of Chief Big Elk. The finished statue will be cast in bronze, stand approximately 10' tall, and weigh over 1000 pounds. Upon completion this summer, the finished statue of Chief Big Elk will be installed at Lewis and Clark Landing in the City of Omaha.



TA: What do you hope your project will accomplish, for both Native people and non-Native people?

BV: It's a great way for both to be educated on this great, courageous leader, this chief. Looking back in time is a good way to look forward, to look at the values and things that he stood for.

Chief Big Elk really wanted to look out for and provide for his people—he looked ahead toward the future and saw what was coming—and he valued education. He appointed Joseph La Flesche as his successor, even though Joseph wasn't his blood son but rather was his adopted son. He knew Joseph would help bridge the gap between the Omaha people and what was coming.

He talked about this in his Great Flood speech, he knew that this flood of settlement was coming and that there were so many people that were going to come that it would be like a great flood. Chief Big Elk knew that the times and the ways that had come before were about to face the most challenging thing that they'd ever faced, more than they ever could have imagined.



But the Chief did foresee that, because he went back East and had seen it and brought the news. So as a visionary and as a leader, he was very intelligent and forward-thinking. Joseph La Flesche carried on Chief Big Elk's work and was the father of Dr. Susan La Flesche, the first Native American doctor in the country. His daughters went out and did their best to help their people.

Now of course it's a very sad story, the way that things went, but I think it could have been even worse had it not been for powerful leaders with visions like Chief Big Elk. He was a warrior, a leader, a chief, the last full-blood chief of the tribe. He's an amazing person who needs to be known in US history and in Native history.

For Native people, I hope that this is a source of pride for them and that the statue of Chief Big Elk can become a powerful icon of their heritage.

For the non-native community, when they stand in front of this statue, I hope it gives them some recognition of the First Peoples that were here. We're the visitors, we're the guests on their land, and that the attitude changes, and that it can help to change the attitude. We are the immigrants coming into their land.



FEATURED ARTICLES

CHIEF BIG ELK SCULPTURE ARTIST BENJAMIN VICTOR INTERVIEW - CONTINUED

Chief Big Elk's descendants have been a huge part of my process and research. They've really helped me a lot, and they're continuing to provide guidance. I'm going to talk to the Omaha

Tribal Council and talk to Chief Big Elk's descendants to get input on what he should be holding in his right hand, which just has a placeholder in it right now.



TA: How long have you been working on the project? What will it weigh when it's finished?

BV: I've been working about 6 months on the actual sculpting but the idea has been percolating for years. John Pappan, Omaha Nation member, first brought the idea of doing a sculpture of Chief Big Elk.

It's been about a year since the project started and about 6 months on the full-size. It will weigh around 1000 pounds in bronze. They're about 1/4" thick, the castings.

THREE SISTERS METHOD

Macy, NE – The Nebraska Indian Community College (NICC) Macy Campus hosted a seminar given by Dr. Christina Hill from Iowa State University (ISU) on the traditional Native American Three Sisters crop cultivation method on Friday, June 24th. At the seminar, Hill and several ISU graduate students explained the benefits of the Three Sisters method, which utilizes symbiotic properties of the traditional Native American crops of corn,

beans, and squash to increase the yields of each and improve soil quality. The Three Sisters Project at ISU seeks to reintroduce traditional Native practices to modern Native communities and reinforce those traditional practices with modern agricultural research. After a tour of the NICC's Macy campus gardens and greenhouse, Hill discussed the mechanisms by which the Three Sisters method succeeds: the corn provides a natural trellis for the beans; the beans add nitrogen to the soil, which is vital for the corn and the squash; and the squash's broad leaves shade the roots of the corn and the means and prevent the soil from drying out. Other topics that were discussed include garden plot, preparation, composting, the benefit of polyculture vs. monoculture crops, and the holistic benefits of community gardening. The goal of the seminar is to educate and promote awareness of the ease and benefits of local, communal food production, which is particularly important in places without ready access to healthy, affordable food.

At NICC's Santee campus, an experiment is underway to see just how effective the Three Sisters method of cultivation really is. Faculty, students, and volunteers have planted one paddock of the Three Sisters and three more paddocks which contain only one of the Three Sisters each. At the end of the growing season, data will be collected about crop yields, soil nutrients, moisture retention, and other variables. Iowa State is running the same Three Sisters experiment at 10 times the scale.

Hill presented another Three Sisters Project seminar on July 16th at NICC's Santee Campus, though the project is ongoing and will continue into fall. Questions can be directed to Dr. Hill at 515-294-0101 or to Ms. Camacho at 515-943-4572.

GREENHOUSE - MACY AND SANTEE CAMPUSES

Macy – The Nebraska Indian Community College (NICC) is excited to announce the expansion of their greenhouse and hydroponics capabilities at the Macy and Santee campuses. Both campuses are now fully equipped with state-of-the-art hydroponics systems and the Santee campus is also home to a traditional outdoor plot that Iowa State University (ISU) and NICC are currently using for agricultural research. The hydroponics system at Macy was completed in the past few weeks, and the system in Santee is already growing peppers and tomatoes.

Greenhouse facilities manager Russell Montgomery recently joined the NICC staff and will oversee greenhouse operations at the college. Montgomery has a degree in agricultural economics and comes to NICC from Texas, where he spent most of his career working

FEATURED ARTICLES

GREENHOUSE - MACY AND SANTEE CAMPUSES - CONTINUED

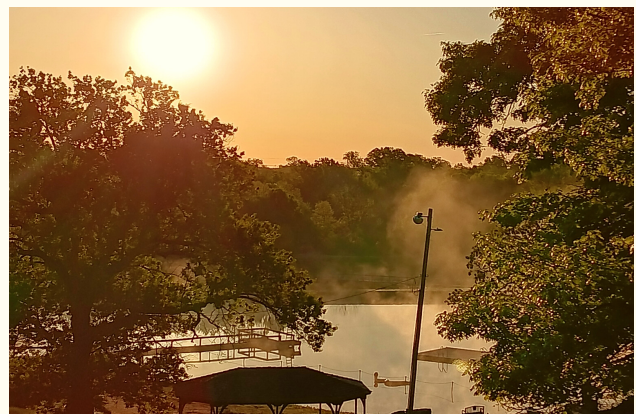
with various indoor and outdoor cultivation systems, including hydroponics, aquaponics, and other traditional and emerging propagation systems.

Montgomery will teach greenhouse management and growing systems classes this fall at the NICC Macy and Santee campuses. Montgomery has big plans for the NICC greenhouses. "First and foremost, I'd like to provide an environment for NICC in which the students can learn about these different growing systems and take that knowledge into the community," he said. Among other things, Montgomery will focus on a kind of hydroponic agriculture called nutrient film technique, where plants sit in a channel and are constantly fed nutrient solution that's running 24/7 through aerated, oxygen-infused systems.

In addition to providing education, Montgomery also envisions NICC producing a large amount of fresh organic food for the surrounding communities. "With these greenhouses, we can start growing earlier in the year and push further into the fall and produce a large amount of food per square foot for a relatively small amount of energy," Montgomery explained. "I'm really excited to be in this position," Montgomery said. "My ultimate goal is to enhance people's desire to achieve food security and food sovereignty. The greenhouse is a fantastic tool in that pursuit."



**PAWNEE LAKE - NAWA IRI
(THANK YOU)
AND I HOPE YOU ENJOYED THIS
SPRING NEWSLETTER!
LEAH VANNOY**



A special THANK YOU from the staff to PNC / NICC 2023 Journalism Intern, Leah Vannoy, the author and designer of this Spring 2023 Newsletter!
