



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

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MCNAA TurtleTalk: July–September 2022

WHAT WE’VE BEEN DOING AT MCNAA

**MCNAA BOARD MEMBERS ATTEND CUMMINGS
FOUNDATION GALA AWARDS CEREMONY**

by Anthony SkyHawk, Board Member. Photos by various people.

On July 14, 2022, MCNAA Board members, Burne Stanley-Peters and I, attended the Cummings Foundations Gala for this years’ recipients of the foundations grant. MCNAA applied for a grant to expand its Educational Resources Program and was one of 140 recipients selected for a multi-year grant for 4 years.*

The Cummings Foundation is one of the largest in all of New England and awards over 30 million yearly and invites recipients of the award to a large gala at their huge epicenter at Cummings



Park in Woburn, MA. Each year the event has been filled to capacity, but with the advent of Covid, the celebrations had to be cancelled for a few years. With its return this year, the Foundation had to institute certain Covid protocols to lessen the potential of spread of the virus. This included limiting no more than 2 representatives from the recipient organizations.

The Cummings (pictured above) and, as in their past galas, each recipient was invited to shout out a “thank you and a few words” while using any background accompaniment they wanted. MCNAA belted out “Thank you Cummings Foundation” in our Native tongue accompanied by a background of 4 Native Turtle rattles. Despite, standing in the back of the hall near an out-side

The event was high-spirited and exciting as recipients were announced by Mr. and

doorway to minimize excessive contact, we were able to make our presence known to everyone in the hall. Although we did take enhanced protections and wore double masks and limited close contact with attendees, as we made our way to the back exit doors, we were able to see and speak briefly with a few of our professional friends that included Beth Francis, President & CEO of the Essex County Community Foundation; as well as representatives from the Buttonwood Museum who knew us. We can't thank the Cummings Foundation enough for their generous support. The funds are something we will be able to rely on, for our Education Program, for the next four years. We are grateful!

NOTE: *Please know that while MCNAA received this grant (\$25K for 4 years), it does not mean that we no longer need your support. On the contrary. We need your support more than ever to help with our other programs that are not funded (scholarships, cultural arts, social change initiatives, etc.) So please, don't let this good news stop your support to MCNAA. ■



Burne at Cummings Foundation Gala.

2022 FALL SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS

This year, because of an unforeseen medical issue and hospitalization of Burne weeks before the scheduled event, the 2022 Virtual Student Meet & Greet was cancelled. However, \$10,000 in scholarships was awarded to the 12 Native American students who applied. They are:

- Ayri T. Ayala (Chappaquiddick Wampanoag), U Mass/Boston
- Ariana L. Barboza (Mashpee Wampanoag), U Mass/Dartmouth
- Kayla Fitzpatrick (Mi'kmaq), Worcester State University
- Christine Frye (Mashpee Wampanoag), Cape Cod Community College
- Kayla Gonsalves (Aquinnah Wampanoag), U Mass/Amherst
- Tyra Jenkins (Nipmuc), U Mas/Lowell
- Leah McClellan (Tuscarora), U Mass/Boston
- Emma Nunes (Mashpee Wampanoag), Fitchburg State University
- Shai R. Rashada Parasram (Chappiquiddic Wampanoag), U Mass/Boston
- Hunter A. Tobey (Mashpee Wampanoag), Cape Cod Community College
- Tiara Williams-Price (Nipmuc), U Mass/Lowell
- Storm A.S. Wollery (Mashpee Wampanoag), Cape Cod Community College

We congratulate these incredible students and wish them success toward their educational goals during the 2022 Fall Semester. ■

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT THE OFFICE!

by Burne Stanley-Peters, Board Member.

With COVID-19 case numbers decreasing, we have opened the office for official business with board and advisory council members. We will entertain visits from members by



appointment only and ask that you wear a face mask. For members who are still being cautious and continue to social distance, we will meet you outside for pick up or drop off of materials.

Still, with no in-person events planned for the remainder of the year, we continue to stay extremely busy with other important work as well as routine tasks. Read what we've been doing:

* Through our Social Assistance Program, we assisted numerous needy Native families and Elders with food and utility bills. We used funds from two different sources. We were fortunate to have received a grant from the AG's Residential Energy Assistance Program as well as donations from individual supporters. With grant funds, we were able to pay heating bills. With donated funds, food gift cards were purchased and mailed to our constituents who were requested them. Also, over the months, we learned about families and Elders having bills like electricity and cable that couldn't be paid. We were fortunate to have been in a position to help with those additional bills.

* Through our Scholarship & Educational Resources Program, we provided culturally sensitive guidance, vital resources and other support to our college students at the start of the fall semester. Additionally, we awarded scholarships to 12 students who applied.

* Closed out our financial books in preparation for the accountant who prepares our tax returns.

* Worked on a report for the first round of the fuel assistance grant.

* Explored more grant opportunities.

* Responded to many requests from organizations and civic groups for speakers, guidance, & information.

* Worked on routine tasks –bookkeeping & account reconciliations, wrote donation receipt letters, processed membership renewals, attended informational & training webinars, responded to general e-mail inquiries, updated our website and facebook pages, etc. ■

ATTENDED PRESENTATION – EXPLORATIONS INTO THE NATIVE AMERICAN HISTORY OF THE DANVERS AREA

by Anthony SkyHawk, Board Member. File photos.

On Wednesday, July 20, 2022, I attended a presentation in Danvers entitled “Explorations into the Indigenous History of the Danvers area” given by Mary Ellen Lepionka of Cape Ann.



Although Ms. Lepionka is not Native, she is a well-known, credentialed historian who has spent the majority of her career researching the Native American history of Essex County.



The presentation was done remarkably well and those in the audience left with a much better understanding of the Native peoples who occupied all of Essex County including Danvers. After the presentation, I met briefly with Ms. Lepionka as I had attended one of her previous



lectures in 2017 at the U.S. Fisheries & Wildlife in Newburyport. (Photo to left.) At the 2017 presentation, a number of our Native Elders and friends attended. They included Hoban Sanford, the late Sly Fox Oakley and his wife Claire who Ms. Lepionka remembered quite well.

It’s always good to gain more insights on the history of Essex County where MCNAA is based and where we have quite a large Native constituency. ■

U.S. Fisheries staff member, Anthony SkyHawk, Mary Ellen Lepionka, Hoban Sanford, the late Sly Fox Oakley, and Claire Oakley.

JUSTICE AND HEALING FOR NATIVE AMERICAN CHILDREN

One of our members, who is a retired United Methodist pastor, shared an article that was in the most recent issue of the New England United Methodist clergy newsletter (August 2022). Her denomination is broken up into Conferences, and each Conference has a Committee on Native American Ministries. They were all invited by the Committees in the two Conferences in the Washington, DC area to participate in a special time of prayer and action, from September 30, 2022 to October 6, 2022 to remember the atrocities associated with tribal children once taken from their families and placed in boarding schools.

“Justice for our Children: Healing for Our Communities” was the theme of this year’s observance, which paid particular attention to those children who died at the schools and whose bodies were buried far from their homes. The observance also marked the “spiritual deaths” of hundreds of Native children whose culture and spirituality were taken from them.



During the week this year, Sept. 30 was the official National Day of Remembrance for U.S. Indian Boarding Schools. Oct. 6 has also been designated as a Day of Remembrance because on that day, in 1879, General Richard Pratt took children from First Nations and opened a boarding school in Carlisle, Pennsylvania.

Information about this dark chapter of history can be found at <https://boardingschoolhealing.org/>.

“The price of success is hard work, dedication to the job at hand, and the determination that whether we win or lose, we have applied the best of ourselves to the task at hand.” — Vince Lombardi

NATIVE AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH – NOVEMBER

November is Native American Heritage Month, first declared by President George H.W. Bush in 1990. The month is a time to celebrate the rich and diverse cultures, traditions, and histories



and to acknowledge the important contributions of Native people. Native American Heritage Month is also an opportunity to educate the general public about Native Americans, to raise a general awareness about the unique challenges Native people have faced both historically and in the present, and the ways in which Native people have worked to conquer these challenges.

To celebrate Native American Heritage Month, try any of the following:

- Read a story by a Native American author.
- Listen to a podcast by a Native American.
- Visit one of many Native American museums, heritage centers, or historical sights.
- Try a delicious Native American recipe.
- Watch a movie or documentary about or by a Native American.
- Participate in or watch a game of Lacrosse.
- Follow Native American activists, educators, and organizations on social media.
- Attend one of many seminars, performances, or events honoring Native American culture.
- Research a Native issue in your area, join it, and/or take action.
- Make a donation to the Mass. Center for Native American Awareness (MCNAA).

During Nat'l Native American Heritage Month, MCNAA is very busy and participates in a number of virtual and in-person events raising awareness about the issues in the region. So if you are looking for a speaker/presenter for your organization, sadly, chances are that we won't be able to accommodate you this year.

INTO THE SPIRIT WORLD – DON MANIDOOGEEK SILVA

by Burne Stanley with excerpts from obituaries and info reprinted from face book posts

It is with deep sadness that we share the news that on July 27, 2022 one of our long-time friends and former MCNAAA Advisory Committee member, Don Manidoogekek, left on his spiritual journey. We send love and deep condolences to his wife Nancy.

During the early years of MCNAA, Don was asked to join our Advisory Committee. He didn't hesitate when asked and said he would be honored to serve. We had many interactions with Don over the years. Many were when he was part of the Dighton Intertribal Indian Council with Leroy "White Wolf" Maddix. He also knew and respected Slow Turtle and would often talk about his journey on the Red Road. Below is more detailed information. These excerpts are from a reprint from the Conley Funeral & Cremation Service page:

"Donald Anthony Silva, also known as "Don Manidoogekek," died peacefully from a recurrence of cancer at his home.

Born on October 5, 1956 and raised in the Taunton area, Donald was a member of the Bear Clan of the Saulte St. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians. Don was very proud of his Indian heritage. He was a member of the Algonquin Medicine Society, former Chief of the Dighton Intertribal Indian Council, Former MCNAAA Advisory Committee Member, member of the United Native American Cultural Center (UNACC) and a member of various Native groups.

Native Spirituality was a driving force in his life and he conducted many and various ceremonies. He was instrumental in helping to establish Red Road recovery meetings and the Red Road Pow-Wow in Dighton, MA. He touched many lives in various groups, making special connections. Together, Donald and Nancy brought their energy for organizing to the local Native community, bringing together diverse gatherings from socials, Pow-Wow's and craft fairs, amongst others.

Donald enjoyed spending time in Michigan with his family, participating in ceremonies and visiting with friends. He especially enjoyed spending time with his Uncle Micky at the Sugar Bush on Sugar Island, making maple syrup while shooting the breeze as the sap boiled.



In 1997, Don graduated from St. Elizabeth's School of Nursing as a registered nurse. He was proud of his earlier career as a mason. He especially loved working at the North American Indian Center of Boston as a diabetes education coordinator, working in the Native community was fulfilling for him.

In addition to his wife, Nancy (Spat) of 29 years, Don is survived by his sons Jeff Silva (Laurie) and Mike Silva (Katie); his four grandchildren, Claire, Griffin, Paige and Hazel; his mother, Barbara Silva; two sisters, Sandra Rose and Debbie Paige (Larry); two brothers, Brian Silva and Tim Silva (Jen); as well as many nieces and nephews.

Donald was predeceased by his father Arnold A. and his brother Billy Silva. He was also predeceased by his biological mother, Agnes (Mendoskin) Frechette of Saulte St. Marie, Michigan.

The circle of lives touched by Donald (and Nancy) is wide, full of gratitude and honor.

Visitation was held at the Conley Funeral Home 138 Belmont Street (rte. 123) Brockton on Thursday, August 4, 2022 from 4-8pm and then again on Friday, August 5, from 4-7pm. The funeral service was held at 7-8pm.

On Saturday, August 6, 1pm, there was a memorial gathering and potluck at the Oak Hill Mobile Home Park, Meeting House in Taunton." ■

COMING UP

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 8, 2022 - 10AM

2ND ANNUAL INDIGENOUS PEOPLES DAY OBSERVANCE

"Honoring Native People and Their Land"

**MERRIMAC RIVER, WATERFRONT PARK
NEWBURYPORT, MA**

THE SACRED FIRE CEREMONY

NOTE: *Shared with MCNAA, several years ago, by a tribal member. Ceremonial practices differ from region to region, tribe to tribe. Not all ceremonies are the same. This article in no way infers that all tribal ceremonies are held in the same way. This is just one point of view.*



When a person passes on, a Sacred Fire is lit and is kept burning from three to eight days.

During this period, the spirit of the deceased person is making its final visits to people and places it has known during its life on Earth, and the Sacred Fire acts as a beacon so that the spirit can find its way back.

When a spot has been chosen for the Sacred Fire, we will begin to clear the area of any obstructions to the ceremony. Rocks are placed around

the fire area to create a circle. We dig a pit for the fire and use the soil as an altar, placed outside the first circle of rocks that surround the fire. We now make a second, larger circle with rocks placed around the Sacred Fire.

The entrance to the Sacred Fire will always be in the Eastern direction because that is the direction the spirit comes to enter the fire. We also enter the Sacred Fire this way and exit in the West, just as the Sun.

We lay down Cedar between the Sacred Fire and the second boundary we created. The Cedar is placed with tip pointed to the west. The medicine guides the spirit in this direction and purifies the path.

We will use an arrow, spear or staff to mark the entrance of the Sacred Fire.

At the entrance will be tobacco and sage to offer the Spirit. We will follow the direction of the Cedar to the altar, where we can place our loved ones favorite and sacred items.

The important role of Fire Keeper can now be given to keep the fire going and to protect the ceremony for its duration.

Because of this importance, if you are chosen to be a Firekeeper, it is necessary that you be aware of your role and duties.

The most obvious duty, of course, is to simply keep the Sacred Fire burning. While this seems simple, it can sometimes be a challenge, particularly if a sudden violent rainstorm should develop. In cases like this, you may have to use considerable ingenuity to maintain the Fire, perhaps by adding more wood, or by moving the Fire under cover until the storm has passed. This is your ultimate purpose, and unless you are told by a knowledgeable medicine person that the Fire can be allowed to go out, you must make every effort to ensure that it stays burning.

You should also be aware that a huge bonfire is not necessary. Using up vast quantities of firewood is not in keeping with the old traditions of limiting your impact on the land around you. A small tidy fire, carefully tended, is generally more respectful and appropriate than a gigantic blaze. Be painstaking in tending the Fire, as that is part of putting your good energy into the ceremony that you are supporting.

As part of the commitment to keeping the fire burning, Firekeepers should keep all of their attention on the Fire. You should not sleep, and you should not get involved in any conversations. You should simply concentrate on the Sacred Fire, and on praying for the people involved in the ceremony for which the Fire was lit. However, if the Fire is to be kept going for a long period, this also means that there should be more than one Firekeeper, and they should be rotated on a regular basis to prevent fatigue.

You also need to keep in mind that not all people understand the significance of a Sacred Fire. You must be prepared to prevent people from throwing garbage into the Fire, or from roasting hot dogs, or other inappropriate behavior. A Sacred Fire is not a campfire, and should not be treated like one.

As the days pass, family members and friends are encouraged to visit as often as possible to spend time with each other and the spirit of the Sacred Fire. This helps with the healing and grieving process of losing a loved one.

When it is time for the ceremony to end, we allow the fire to burn out on its own. We will also close the Eastern entrance and open the Western door to make way for the spirit to leave for the spirit world.

This is when our loved one joins our ancestors and has time for reflection about the time they spent on Earth.

When it is time, the journey continues to the next stage of our spirits path.

The spirit is as infinite and limitless as the journey.

Dedicated to all our ancestors that have gone before us....

Until Our Spirits Meet Again. ■

MCNAA'S MONTHLY GIVING CIRCLE

BECOME A GEM DONOR

We received a small grant to help Native families and elders with heating costs this winter season and a second grant to expand our education program but these grants do not help with other program needs such as: scholarships for students; food for elders and families; social change events; and youth activities. Monthly donations are a sure way to help with that.....for our organization to receive recurring funds on a regular basis to help more families and/or to put towards some of our other important initiatives.



In the spirit of “paying it forward”, we invite you as well as large, medium, and small businesses, to become a GEM donor and help make a difference by joining the circle of monthly giving. We are a 33 year old, tax exempt organization that needs additional support throughout the year. 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 click “make this a monthly donation.” Or you can mail a check monthly to the organization at: MCNAA, ATTN: Monthly Giving Circle, 85 Constitution Lane, Suite 3-B1, Danvers, MA. Thank you. ■

“The best index to a person’s character is how he treats people who can’t do him any good, and how he treats people who can’t fight back.”

— Abigail Van Buren