

Native American, Alaska Indian heritage to be commemorated across Fort Bragg, Pope

by **Bessie L. Dietrich**
Paraglide

During November, we are asked as a nation to recognize American Indian Heritage Month and honor all the American Indians and Alaska Natives, who have all been a fundamental part of the American character in many ways.

Although the odds have been against them many times, American Indians have remained steadfast as a vital cultural, political, social and moral presence in our nation.

In 1990, President George H. W. Bush approved a joint resolution that designated November as National American Indian History Month. Since 1994, similar proclamations have been made annually by each president in office.

"America is blessed by the character and strength of American Indians and Alaska Natives, and our citizens are grateful for the countless ways Native Americans have enriched our country and lifted the spirit of our nation," said President George W. Bush in the 2006 National American History Month proclamation.

It is a process to get American Indians recognized, said Gregory A. Richardson, executive director for the N.C. Commission of Indian Affairs. "It is a time for local, state, and national cultural recognition on American Indians."

North Carolina has the largest American Indian population east of the Mississippi River. In fact, there are more than 80,000 American Indians living in North Carolina.

However, National American

Indian Heritage Month focuses on more than just the cultural importance of the American Indians.

For more than 200 years, American Indians have participated with distinction in United States military actions. Their fortitude, bravery, and fighting spirit were documented by American military leaders as early as the 18th century. "We are especially grateful for the Native Americans who have served and continue to serve in our nation's military," said Bush. "These brave individuals have risked their lives to protect our citizens, defend our democracy and spread the blessings of liberty to people around the world."

Perhaps this courage comes from the mentality of the American Indian warrior, who needs physical, mental and spiritual strength. An American Indian warrior should always be prepared to overpower the enemy and face death. Because of this, American Indian Soldiers, Sailors, Marines and Airmen have heroically fought in all of the past wars and armed conflicts.

On Tuesday, Gregory Richardson will visit Fort Bragg and celebrate National American Indian Heritage Month by delivering a speech, "A Warrior's Tradition: Contributing to Our Nation's Freedom." The event will be held at the Fort Bragg Officers' Club from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

"Ethnic observances, such as American Indian Heritage Month, promote understanding, teamwork, harmony, pride and esprit among Soldiers, families, and civilian employees," said Rosa Garris-Turner,

special interest program manager and equal employment opportunity specialist of Fort Bragg.

Four winners of an art contest to commemorate the American Indian Heritage Month from Fort Bragg schools will be announced at the luncheon.

Cultural displays also will be exhibited from University of North Carolina Pembroke, East Carolina University and Fort Bragg Cultural Resources. Federal and state recognized tribe attendees at the luncheon will include the Coharie Tribe, the Eastern Band of Cherokee, the Haliwa Saponi Tribe, the Saponi, the Meherrin Indian Tribe, the Occaneechi Band of Saponi Tribe, the Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina, the Waccamaw Siouan and the Tuscarora Tribe of New York.

For more information about Fort Bragg's observance, contact Rosa Garris-Turner at 396-7040.

Pope Air Force Base also has events underway to celebrate National American Indian Heritage Month.

From 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Wednesday there will be a pow wow at Pope Park with free admission that will host food vendors, American Indian arts and crafts for sale and various entertainers.

Also, from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. on Nov. 30, there will be a final celebration at Pope Club, where there will be hors d'oeuvres, dancers, storytellers, giveaways, and more.

(Editor's Note: Information was gathered from <http://www.doa.state.nc.us/cia/indian.htm> and <http://www.history.navy.mil/>)

Environmental education

by **Lucille Anne Newman**
Paraglide

When the Environmental Educators of North Carolina held their 16th annual conference on Fort Bragg Nov. 2 through 5, the theme was renewing the educator's sense of wonder.

For Louie and Jackie Hough, former Soldiers, their organic farm, the Raft Swamp Farm, just outside of Raeford, peaked the educators' interest.

"The conference moves around the state, and this year it happens to be on Fort Bragg," said Hough who explained that Fort Bragg was the main focus this year. Bragg was chosen because of its commitment to the sustainable Sandhills and the installation's success in protecting the long-leaf ecosystem and the red cockaded woodpecker as well as their innovative ways to divert waste materials by using them to improve the environment. Those who visited Hough's farm on Sunday learned about the benefits of organic farming and sustainable living through natural methods such as wind power, beekeeping and more.

"I hope that they learn that Fort Bragg does have a community farm that is a non-profit organization. This is a place where people can learn about farming as well as organic gardening and farming methods. There are opportunities to learn here. Today we're teaching the educators but we have had school groups out here. We're open by appointment these days because we are still looking for

volunteers," Hough said. She said there are plenty of volunteer opportunities available and a few that do not require volunteers to physically work on the farm but they can contribute on their Web site at www.raftswamp-farms.org.



photo by Lucille Anne Newman/Paraglide

Xavier Chancy, 5, carefully holds two red wiggler worms being used for making composts naturally at Raft Swamp Farms in Raeford, N.C., Sunday.

Educators such as Trudy Matheny of Chapel Hill, N.C., and owner of the Genesis Farm, said field trips such as her visit to Raft Swamp Farm are beneficial not only to educators but to everyone, as farm life is becoming a thing of the past.

"I have my own farm, Genesis Farm, which is a school for kids. Using our farms as field trip sites will help teach about farm life," said Matheny. "What

I'm seeing (these days is) that there are a lot of adults who don't quite understand the farming experience and although I teach kids about farm animals and how to take care of them, I hope (these educators) can use our farms as a field trip site to teach about farm life because it is disappearing."

For Gwen Chancy of Council, N.C., the trips, as well as the information she has received, have helped her decide on how she wants to grow her garden.

"I'm learning a lot," Chancy said. "(I had) wanted to find out about organic growing and even did some experimenting, it's beneficial to be able to grow food without the pesticides and other harmful chemicals. During the conference I hope to learn more about improving the soil, keeping bees and how to grow things organically."





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