

NAS NEWS

Spring 2025 Edition
Vol. 15 Issue 1

*The Center for the study of South Carolina's Native American peoples,
their histories, and their cultures*

SC Tribal Nations Sign Historic Treaty

Supporting the MMIWR
Movement in SC

Native American
Studies Meets
Disney Studies



DIRECTOR'S COLUMN



Lizard Pot, 2006 by Caroleen Sanders, Catawba Nation. The piece is from the Robert Dale Mitchell Collection in the NAS Special Collections.

Greetings from the Director:

The morning of Feb. 9, 2025, Mary Caroleen (Carol) Sanders passed away. Caroleen was the most talented Catawba potter I've ever met, and one of the finest people. She rose above a childhood of dire poverty to become a great artist and an honorable bearer of her people's traditions. She was always graceful and dignified, yet she had a wicked (and at times "blue") sense of humor. I was honored to have known her and to have called her my friend.

Caroleen was our first Artist-in-Residence at the Center in 2013. During that time, she would tell us stories about her life and about growing up on the Catawba Reservation, all the while meticulously crafting her pottery. I watched as she made the most amazing catfish effigy (a form I had never seen before). She had shaped an amazing piece, but she stepped back from it, considered its size (which apparently was bigger than she wanted), and abruptly flattened it back down to a mound of clay. My heart nearly stopped! Even her "mistakes" were works of art.

Caroleen was born in 1944 and grew up in a house off of Reservation Road on the Catawba Nation Reservation. She told us once in an interview that she grew up in extreme poverty, a childhood she described as “tough as nails.” Her father had to build a second one-room “shack” for the family when the first began to fall apart, and the family used cardboard boxes in place of dry wall. She hauled water from the nearby well and often found herself hungry. But she told us something she had once heard, “there’s no shame in being poor, it’s just inconvenient.”

With that sense of humor and a dedicated work ethic, Caroleen left the Reservation for a career as a hairstylist and dog trainer, but she said that her heart never left her community and the pottery her family and ancestors produced. She was part of a pottery-making line that stretches back through the centuries and includes some of the most significantly known potters of the 19th and 20th centuries.

Caroleen made her ancestors proud by becoming one of the most amazing potters of the tradition, and, perhaps more importantly, a teacher and mentor to future Catawba potters. Even in her final year, when her health was rapidly failing, she still took time to mentor younger potters. And she still took time to visit us at the Center. We were honored by her support for our work and for her friendship.

Come by the Center sometime and see Caroleen’s amazing work (including the remade catfish). If you knew her, tell us a story about her (you know you have one!). And if you didn’t, ask any of our faculty or staff about her. The loss of her presence will be felt for a long time, but her creations live on. And perhaps more importantly, her legacy lives on in the potters she mentored, the scholars she taught (myself gratefully included), and the friends and family who shared laughs and love with her. She will be terribly missed, but we are so grateful for the time we had with her.

We also recently lost another NASC supporter and friend Dr. Gail Wagner of USC. Her long-time colleague Professor Chris Judge offers his memorial to Dr. Wagner in the pages that follow. You’ll also find less solemn news about our faculty and staff’s achievements and activities, opportunities to support our Center and its work, and information on upcoming events.

Stephen Criswell



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ABOVE CAPTION:

Late January, Caitlyn Bright, Director of ArtFields, and Harriet Green, ArtFields Consultant, received a tour from 2024 Center Artist-in-Residence Bill Harris of the exhibit, "What the Fire May Gift." The exhibit, which features pottery made by Harris and his Blue Heron Clay protégés Kent Harris and Elizabeth Harris, is on display through May 3, 2025.

FRONT PAGE CAPTION:

On Wednesday, Feb. 5, Catawba Nation Chief Brian Harris holds the treaty signed by South Carolina's tribes during the press conference for The Tribal Alliance of South Carolina Nations Treaty at the South Carolina State House. Photo by Chris Judge.

HOURS

Monday: Closed
Tuesday: 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.
Wednesday: 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.
Thursday: 10 a.m. - 7 p.m.
Friday: 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.
Saturday: 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.
Sunday: Closed

NAS NEWS STAFF

Feature Writer and Newsletter Editor:
Ashley Lowrimore

Design and Production Editor:
Elisabeth Avelar

CONTACT INFORMATION

Phone: 803-313-7172
Email: usclnasp@sc.edu

119 South Main Street
Lancaster, SC 29720

[**nativeamericanstudies.org**](http://nativeamericanstudies.org)

Learn more about our Native
American Studies Faculty and Staff
here!

Follow the Center on **social media!**

Native American
South Carolina Archive:
[**nativesouthcarolina.org**](http://nativesouthcarolina.org)



Did you know that the word “owl”
in the Catawba language is
“huhu”? Visit our owl puppet and
other puppet friends in our “Clay
and Play!” interactive children’s
exhibit!



USC Lancaster Native American Studies Director Dr. Stephen Criswell and Assistant Director Chris Judge had the privilege of attending the Tribal Alliance of South Carolina Nations Treaty at the South Carolina State House on Wednesday, Feb. 5. Tribes signing the treaty to support each other include the Catawba Indian Nation, Beaver Creek Indians, Edisto Natchez-Kusso Tribe of South Carolina, Pee Dee Indian Tribe, Santee Indian Organization, Piedmont American Indian Association- Lower Eastern Cherokee Nation, Sumter Tribe of Cheraw Indians, Waccamaw Indian People, and Wassamasaw Tribe of Varnertown Indians.



Later, South Carolina Governor Henry McMaster officially proclaimed Feb. 5, 2025 as South Carolina Native Nations Day. Photos of State House, tribal chiefs, and Gov. Henry McMaster by Chris Judge.



Photo of S.C. First Lady Peggy McMaster, Gov. McMaster, and Stephen Criswell by Kriss Jones.



Last December, the Center hosted its 11th Annual Native American Winter Art & Craft Festival, featuring artwork from a variety of local artisans from several Native American tribal nations, including the Beaver Creek, Caddo, Catawba, Lakota, Waccamaw, and more. The event included several returning artists as well as new vendors, including work by (clockwise from left) Bobby and Paula Blue (beadwork and jewelry), Robbins Family Pottery (Catawba pottery), and Candance Richardson (language and coloring book author).

WINTER FESTIVAL WRAP-UP

HEINEMANN-PRIEST JOINS MMIWR TASK FORCE

The Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Relatives (MMIWR) crisis of violence against Native people isn't just a problem affecting the western United States— it's an epidemic affecting the entire nation, where cases often go underreported and overlooked, even in South Carolina.

About “43% of Native American families in South Carolina have a missing or murdered female family members,” according to a **Feb. 4, 2025 Facebook post** by the South Carolina Indian Affairs Commission (SCIAC).

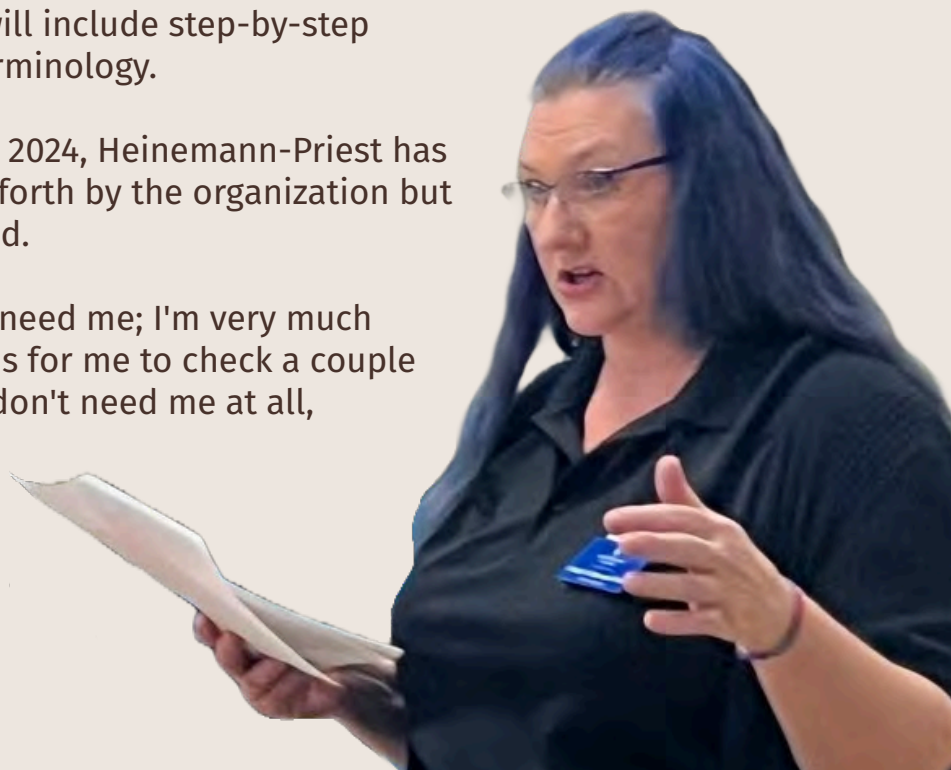
The MMIWR crisis was highlighted by Terence Little Water, Chief Executive Officer of the SCIAC, in the Center's December 2023 Lunch and Learn, **“It's Happening Here: The Epidemic of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Relatives in South Carolina.”** When Little Water referenced the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, Two Spirits, and Relatives Task Force during the lecture, USC Lancaster Instructor of English, Catawba, and Native American Literature Claudia Heinemann-Priest (pictured below) offered to help as an ally, knowing the importance of advocating for the end of violence toward Native women and raising awareness about the issue.

Formed out of the SCIAC, the task force supports the MMIWR movement not only by painting symbolic red handprints and holding vigils but also addressing MMIWR-related issues by meeting with coroners, victim advocates, and law enforcement.

Heinemann-Priest says that the organization is working on website development and writing materials on the human trafficking awareness and prevention program. The task force also is working to create a guidebook for families to follow when a relative goes missing, which will include step-by-step instructions and medical and legal terminology.

Since joining the task force in January 2024, Heinemann-Priest has edited and proofread documents put forth by the organization but is ready to help in any capacity needed.

“I help wherever I can, wherever they need me; I'm very much in a background role; if all they need is for me to check a couple of commas here and there, or if they don't need me at all, that's fine too. I at least want to be an ally and be able to forward any information. Most of this is being spearheaded by Indigenous women, as it should be, and it's very much a grassroots organization.”



Though she notes she is not involved in the day-to-day operations of the task force, Heinemann-Priest says the task force reviews domestic violence and human trafficking, and promotes advocacy and prevention of gender-based violence and lateral violence, which are non-physical aggressions such as bullying, gossiping, social/cultural exclusion, shaming, etc.

One of the facts that most surprised Heinemann-Priest upon joining the task force was learning that law enforcement forms do not include a Native American identification option.

“You have checkboxes for white or Caucasian, Black or African American, Asian, Hispanic, and then you have Other, so Native Americans are often misidentified and their families or their nations are never told, ‘we think we found one of your relatives,’” she said. “A lot of times, they depend on visual identifiers and Native American people are identified as Hispanic or African American, or sometimes even white.”

In her lecture, Little Water explained that a survey conducted by the SCIAAC and the USC College of Social Work found that a majority of MMIWR cases reported in the state occur in the I-95 corridor.

“I personally was shocked to learn how much it is happening, but in hindsight, when I think about it, I’m not really surprised,” said Heinemann-Priest. “The I-95 corridor is a big area for transportation of goods and unfortunately, there’s this prevalent idea that Indigenous women are not human beings, that they are exotic. We need to realize that this is happening and to be vigilant, especially in areas where there’s a lot of traffic and that is the I-95 corridor.”

Heinemann-Priest says that one way that anyone can promote awareness of the MMIWR movement is to observe May 5, proclaimed National Missing and Murdered Indigenous Persons Awareness Day by President Biden in 2021. Also known as Red Dress Day, the campaign originated in Canada in 2010.

“Red Dress Day memorializes missing and murdered Indigenous women and relatives and is a day for collective mourning and advocacy, empowering individuals to speak out against gender-based violence and to demand meaningful change,” she said. “What you do essentially is hang a red dress out in front of your house, or in a public place. Wearing red in solidarity is another way to express that. It’s like putting out a flag.”

For more information, visit the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the **National Indigenous Women’s Resource Center**, and the **South Carolina Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault**.



NEW ARTICLE BY NOOE EXPLORES FLORIDA HISTORY, TOURISM

Congratulations to USC Lancaster Assistant Professor of History and Center Historian Dr. Evan Nooe on the publication of his article “Making History at Disney Springs: Florida’s Past as Themed Tourism,” available to read for free in the inaugural volume of the International Journal of Disney Studies!

“The International Journal of Disney Studies came about through a collaboration of interdisciplinary scholars that were working through an academic group established during the COVID pandemic called the Disney Culture and Society Research Network, or we abbreviate it as DisNet,” said Nooe. “Robyn Muir, Lecturer in Media and Communication at the University of Surrey, was instrumental in founding this organization and helping navigate the association with this journal. There’s a wide range of scholars looking at the facets of how Disney’s physical properties and its intellectual properties are influencing the world.”

The journal follows Nooe’s last publication, “Aggression and Sufferings: Settler Violence, Native Resistance, and the Coalescence of the Old South,” released in December 2023. The book was awarded the 2022 Anne B. and James B. McMillan Prize in Southern History by the editorial board of the University of Alabama Press and the 2024 Best First Book Award from Phi Alpha Theta, the National History Honor Society.

Nooe’s article explores the themes of Florida history, architecture, and tourism in Disney Springs, Disney World’s themed 120-acre shopping center including retail, dining, and entertainment facilities that are open to the public at no additional admission cost. Nooe says the center has existed with various storylines since 1975, though the current backstory and theming has existed since 2015.

“This article examines one of the understudied places of the Disney Company, and especially of Walt Disney World in Central Florida,” said Nooe. “What they've done is overlay this shopping center with the aesthetic or design of a repurposed small Florida town. According to Disney's fictional history of Disney Springs, this community has a backstory going all the way back supposedly to 1850, when a South Carolina settler traveled down to Central Florida and came across this spring in the wilderness. One of the things that I tried to do with the investigation of Disney Springs was articulate how the Disney Company is telling the story of Florida history through Disney Springs, through these designs, through this architecture, through these story elements throughout the shopping center.”



Photo by Evan Nooe

While Nooe visited the Disney parks with his family occasionally while growing up in Central Florida and now visits yearly with his family, it wasn't until he was working at UNC Charlotte that he began incorporating Disney elements into his classes.

“I was teaching a Southern Studies class and wanted to do a project and course on food in the south,” said Nooe. “Part of Disney Springs's theming and storytelling is how they leverage food to create associations with the state of Florida and American South as a whole.”

Some of Nooe's research has centered on Chef Art Smith's Homecoming, the Polite Pig, and the Disney-owned and operated D-Luxe Burger, fictionally established in 1850 as the original settler cabin of the town that becomes Disney Springs. Nooe says this settler cabin later turns into a cattle ranch, which later turns into a restaurant itself.

“The buildings that each of these restaurants are placed in reinforce different aspects of Florida, Florida history, and architectural eras,” he said.

Disney has a longstanding history of storytelling through combined use of fantasy and historical architecture, often blending fact and fiction to create immersive tourist experiences. Nooe says the company has not always depicted Indigenous cultures accurately on screen or in the parks, and whether subtly or unintentionally, these misrepresentations can lead to erasure of Indigenous peoples, or the perpetuation of harmful stereotypes.

“We see that with the need to create this digestible story for Disney Springs,” said Nooe. “You have a very clear-cut beginning when this family from South Carolina establishes a cabin in 1850, and then you have progress for the next century, emanating out from the settler cabin. But what gets left out is how those opportunities are created.”

Nooe believes it is no coincidence that the timeline of the cabin was set in 1850; to orient its story too far back in time would factually and fictionally establish the cabin in Indigenous territory.

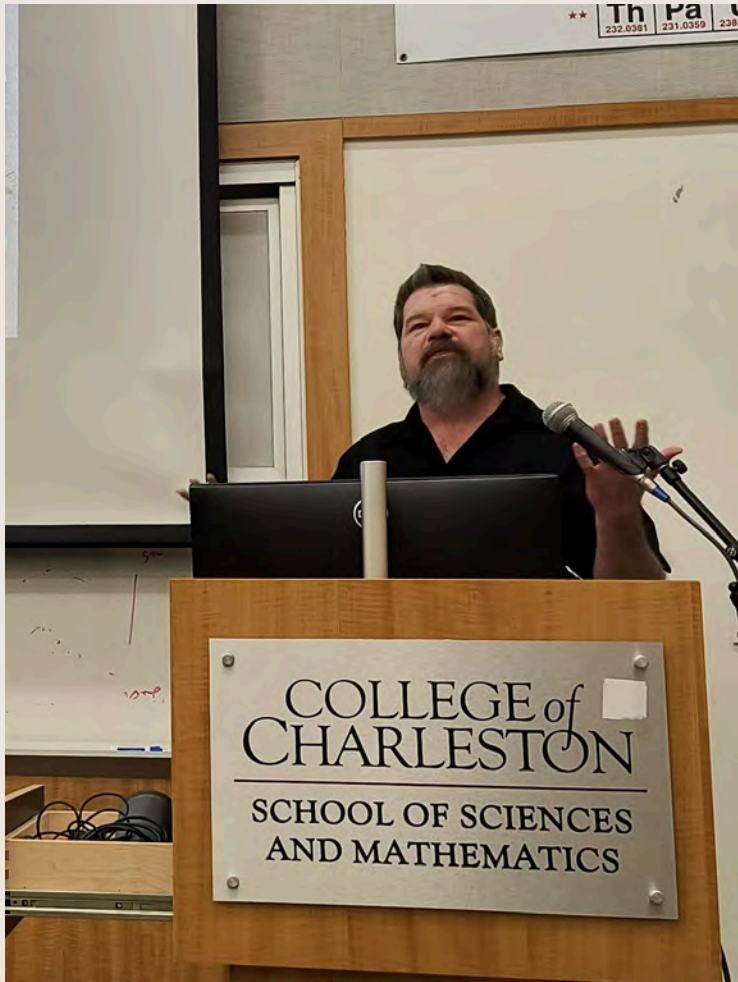
“Prior to the acquisition of the Florida peninsula from Spain, there were Indigenous towns across the Florida interior,” he said. “I think the Disney Company has intentionally chosen this time period, because it takes place after the expulsion campaigns that are going to scar Florida between 1835 and 1842 and it's also a decade before the American Civil War, so it dodges these two complicated, less optimistic, less romantic events in Florida history.

“That’s a common strategy that the Disney Company uses to try and navigate through the more unseemly, less optimistic points of American history. They’re not creating anything that isn't already in the popular consciousness.”

“Making History at Disney Springs: Florida’s Past as Themed Tourism” can be read [here](#). While the first volume of the International Journal of Disney Studies is free, the bi-annual journal requires a subscription for subsequent issues.



MATERIAL CULTURE PANEL AT COLLEGE OF CHARLESTON



In late January, the College of Charleston hosted Native American Studies Director Dr. Stephen Criswell, Archaeologist Chris Judge, and Director of Collections and Galleries Brittany Taylor- Driggers for the “Memory and Material Culture: Archaeology and Artifacts” panel discussion. Part of the Indigenous Voices Series, the event was sponsored by Clemson Historic Preservation, the Carolina Lowcountry & Atlantic World Program, and the Preservation Society of Charleston. Photo of Dr. Stephen Criswell (left) by Chris Judge. Photo of Chris Judge by Sharon Simmers-Norton.

NOOE AWARDED BEST FIRST BOOK

Congratulations to Center Historian Dr. Evan Nooe (pictured right), who was awarded the 2024 Best First Book Award from the Phi Alpha Theta Historical Honor Society in February for his book, “Aggression & Sufferings: Settler Violence, Native Resistance, and the Coalescence of the Old South.” The award honors the best book debut by an author in any field of history.

A complete list of winners can be found [here](#).

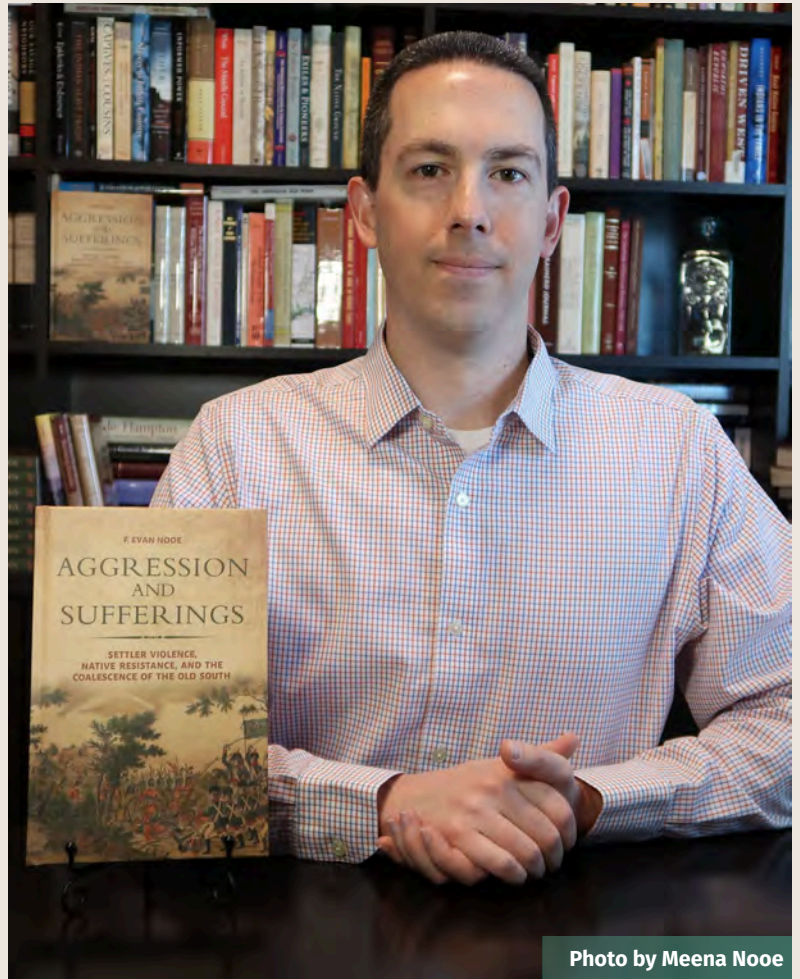


Photo by Meena Nooe

Visit [NASCA](#) to learn more about South Carolina's Native Communities and access images, videos, timelines, an interactive map, and more!

Watch our previous virtual programming on the Center's [Youtube Channel](#)! Be sure to like, subscribe, and ring the bell for notifications!

MODJESKA SIMKINS SCHOOL HOSTS 10TH ANNIVERSARY GALA



You never know where our faculty will show up! In late January, Center Archaeologist Chris Judge spoke at the 10th Anniversary Gala for the South Carolina Progressive Network's Modjeska Simkins School for Social Justice at The Big Apple in Columbia, S.C. Judge is a lecturer with the school. Photos by Becci Robbins.



IN MEMORIAM: DR. GAIL E. WAGNER

BY CHRISTOPHER JUDGE

Dr. Gail E. Wagner, Professor Emerita, a recently retired faculty member in the Department of Anthropology at the University of South Carolina in Columbia, passed away in November 2024. She was a frequent visitor to and supporter of the Native American Studies Center. She joined the faculty at USC in 1989. During her 33 years at USC, she taught both undergraduate and graduate courses ranging from Primates, People & Prehistory (an introduction to evolution) to Principles of Archaeology (an introduction to archaeology) to Food and Culture to Ethnoecology. She taught both archaeological and cultural anthropological courses, all the while supervising Ph.D., Masters, and undergraduate theses and research projects.

Dr. Wagner had 15 peer reviewed publications in books, monographs, and journals, 27 non-peer reviewed publications, nine book reviews, and six popular publications.

Over the years numerous awards have been bestowed upon Gail. Back in 1995, Gail received the Outstanding Service Award from the Archaeological Society of South Carolina. In 2000, she was the first in her department to be awarded the University of South Carolina Michael J. Mungo Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching.

A second award in 2018, the USC Office of the Provost presented the Garnet Apple Award for Teaching Innovation to Dr. Wagner. This annual award honors the University of South Carolina's most exceptional faculty who demonstrate an ongoing commitment to best teaching practices and an ongoing record of developing innovative strategies to enhance student learning in their courses. In 2022, she received the S.C. Governors Award in the Humanities and in 2023 a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Archaeological Society of South Carolina.

She continued to co-direct the long-term Wateree Archaeological Research Project (WARP), which studies the archaeology of the Wateree River Valley in central South Carolina, in the vicinity of Camden, S.C. until her passing.



Photo by Christopher Judge

GIVE 4 GARNET 2025

Wednesday, March 26 is Give 4 Garnet 2025, but early giving begins Thursday, March 6!

Thank you for your gifts to the Educational Foundation of USC Lancaster that will support programs, exhibits, and activities presented by the Native American Studies Center!

This Give 4 Garnet, we invite you to consider donating a gift of \$65 to the **Native American Studies Center Endowment** in honor of USC Lancaster's 65th Anniversary celebration.

We also are excited to announce a special challenge match opportunity for the **Henry Shute Archaeology Lab Fund!** Center Archaeologist Chris Judge (pictured below) challenges he will match \$5 (up to \$300) for the first 60 people that donate \$5 or more, doubling the impact of contributions.

Every donation allows us to continue our mission and ensure that we can keep making a difference for years to come. We're grateful for the generous gifts from donors that allow us to make our work possible!

Funds and their descriptions and designated numbers are listed below:

B12216 - Native American Studies Center Endowment- This fund supports the Center's programs, research, and other activities.

A32521 - Fred "Henry" Shute Archaeology Lab Fund- This fund is designated for the purchase of Archaeology Lab storage supplies.

Click [here](#) to Give 4 Garnet!



EVENTS CALENDAR

MARCH
26-27

Give 4 Garnet

Support the Native American Studies Center during this annual giving event.

MAY
3

Exhibit Closing

Last day to see the exhibit, "What the Fire May Gift."

MARCH
28
Noon

Lunch and Learn: "Trickster Tales of Southeastern Native Americans: Creek, Catawba, and Cherokee Stories"

Lecture by Terry Norton, Winthrop University Professor Emeritus.

MAY
17
9 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Spring Art & Craft Festival

In conjunction with the annual Red Rose Festival held today, shop for pottery, jewelry, baskets, beadwork, and many more unique creations by Native American artists from around the region. This event is free and open to the public.

APRIL
25
Noon

Lunch and Learn: "To Take Shape and Meaning: Form and Design in Contemporary American Indian Art"

Lecture by Nancy Strickland Chavis, Director and Curator of the Museum of the Southeast American Indian at UNC Pembroke.

MAY
23
Noon

Lunch and Learn: "From the Eye of the Hurricane: Labor, land, and the Great Sea Island Storm of 1893"

Lecture by Caroline Grego, Asst. Professor of History at Queens University

APRIL
25-26

48th Annual Edisto Natchez-Kusso Powwow

Join the Edisto Natchez-Kusso for their powwow in Ridgeville, S.C. Click [here](#) for more information.

JUNE
27
Noon

Lunch and Learn: "Laser Beams and Old Maps: Searching Remotely for Archaeology Under Lake Wateree"

Lecture by James Scurry, NASC Research Affiliate, and Professor Chris Judge, USC Lancaster Instructor of Anthropology and Archaeology. Rescheduled from September 2024.

MAY
3
9:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.

Eastern Cherokee, Southern Iroquois, and United Tribes of South Carolina, Inc. Powwow

Join ECSIUT for their powwow at Haygood Mill in Pickens, S.C. Click [here](#) for more information.

JUNE
28

Exhibit Closing

Last day to see the exhibit, "Celebrating Indigenous Identity and Culture in the Lowcountry."

CENTER EXHIBITIONS

D. Lindsay Pettus Gallery: *The Story of Catawba Pottery.* This National Endowment for the Arts funded exhibit traces the art, culture and history of Catawba pottery, the oldest Native American pottery tradition in the United States. Permanent Exhibit.

North Gallery: *Celebrating Indigenous Identity and Culture in the Lowcountry.* This exhibit, funded in part by the Gaylord and Dorothy Donnelley Foundation and the USC Racial Justice and Equity Research Fund, highlights the state-recognized tribes of the South Carolina Lowcountry, their history, cultural traditions, and celebrations. Through June 28, 2025.

Red Rose Gallery: *What the Fire May Gift.* Artwork by USCL's 2023 Artist-in-Resident Bill Harris. This exhibit will highlight work by Bill Harris during and after his residency at the Center, and work by his proteges. Through May 3, 2025.

Five Points Gallery: *Soul of the South.* Curated by the Morris Center for Lowcountry Heritage, "Soul of the South" takes visitors on a musical journey highlighting the influences that Native Americans, enslaved Africans, and the European colonizers in the Lowcountry had on various genres of music: gospel, jazz, blues, musical theater and rock and roll. Largely sponsored by Gretsch, the renowned drum and musical instrument maker, the exhibit also showcases local musicians and groups whose notoriety reached beyond the Lowcountry. Through Aug. 30, 2025.

Duke Energy Gallery: *Clay and Play!* This educational children's exhibit includes traditional Native American folktales, colorful displays and wall murals, pottery displays, an interactive Three Sisters Garden where guests can "pick" corn, beans, and squash, and other props for immersive play. Through Aug. 5, 2026.

Back Gallery: *Growing Through Donations.* This exhibit highlights donations from our Special Collections. Semi-permanent Exhibit