



Pointe-au-Chien TRIBAL INTERGENERATIONAL CAMP

PROJECT STATUS

Project Year: 2018
Status: Ongoing
Category: Cultural Heritage
Location: Pointe-au-Chien
Project Partners: BTNEP provided support to the Lowlander Center / Pointe-au-Chien Tribal Center for the expansion for the Intergenerational Cultural Camp

BACKGROUND AND PROBLEM ADDRESSED

The Pointe-au-Chien Indian Tribal Community is located in lower Pointe-au-Chien, Louisiana, which is a traditional village of their ancestors, the Chitimacha. The Pointe-au-Chien inhabit the southern part of Terrebonne and Lafourche Parishes along Bayou Pointe-au-Chien. The Pointe-au-Chien are the caretakers of an area continuously inhabited by indigenous tribes of South Louisiana, and descend from tribes historical to Louisiana and the Mississippi River Valley. This small French-speaking tribe continues to comprise a distinct community despite colonization, land loss, lack of status as a federally recognized tribe, exploitation of the land and people, and denial of educational opportunities. The perseverance, ability to adapt, humility, and cultural knowledge of its people have sustained the Tribe.

When the Pointe-au-Chien Tribal Intergenerational Cultural Camp started 7 years ago, the intention was to teach the tribe children about their native American ancestors and the culture they left behind. Over the course of several decades, some of the cultural and lifeway practices were set aside for various reasons. There was social pressure to 'fit in' with the general society by embracing the 'modern' ways of doing



things. The camp was started so that the tribe could take a week during the summer to teach local kids about their culture and to promote Native pride in them. The camp is a hands-on approach so that children will remember what they have learned and will bring it home to share with their families. They participate in drumming, dancing, and researching ancestors.



PROJECT DESCRIPTION

At the camp, the main speakers were tribal elders, who took great pride in sharing their life experiences with the youth. Among topics discussed were the different childhoods of the audience compared to that of the elders, as well as the way the elders made a living. For example Mr. Donald brought his fur pelts and traps because children have never experienced trapping. The children were interested and got to experience the childhood games the elders played and learn with imagination, a life before electronics. A field trip on the water to share how the land has changed and with it, the change in how the Tribe lives and how resources have changed. A boat trip also included viewing of sacred grounds, mounds, and a conversation of why these resources are important to the people in understanding the past and future. Music was also core to the week's experience, as the elders and children always enjoy drumming and singing.

The participants learned about the cultural heritage and richness of their ancestors and their pride in being Native when involved with the camp. Most of the elders were well aware of their ancestors and they have always had pride in their community and family. Young people learned the value of wetland resources and cultural heritage. Most of the youth and children are just recently understanding about their culture through the camp.

TRIBE'S EVALUATION

We feel that our camp was a success this year. We had elders and younger parents attend and participate. We had children helping adults and adults helping children. Our participants ranged from age 2 to 83. We feel that these experiences will become part of their life and that they will pass on what they have learned. Each year elders who share more of their stories and the memories of their ancestors enrich the camp experience. The pride of being native and the understanding of a tribal family has grown as well. As the interest from the youth increases, it also encourages the elders to become more engaged with their knowledge and stories.

CCMP ACTION ITEMS ADDRESSED

SR = Sustained Recognition and Citizen Involvement

SR-1: Community Engagement

SR-6 : Continuing and Informal Education Programs

SR-7: Cultural Heritage and Lifeways

