

FARINA KING,
PH.D.

Indigenous Studies & U.S. History



Eufaula Area Museum Service Learning Project

During the Fall 2017 semester, Farina King's three classes participated in the Eufaula Area Museum Service Learning Project, which allowed students to apply their learning to serve local communities through a partnership with the Eufaula Area Museum in Eufaula, OK. Students worked in groups to research and assess a collection of artifacts from the Eufaula Area Museum, and then individually prepared and wrote exhibit labels for the historical gallery. At the end of the semester the groups presented their work for the museum. After the semester concluded, Dr. King submitted a portfolio of the students' works to the Eufaula Area Museum, many of which were accepted and are now on display.

On September 13, 2017, Linda Wendel, the Executive Director of the Eufaula Area Museum, met with the student groups during their classes on the NSU Tahlequah campus and presented to them with images and descriptions of the primary sources. On December 2, 2017, Dr. King's classes traveled to the Eufaula Area Museum to visit and present their exhibit labels as a culmination of the overarching service-learning project.

The following include two examples (from Dr. King's Native American History course) of exhibit labels that were written by students and presented to the Eufaula Area Museum:



Model of the Eastern Creek Council House

Before the Muscogee Creek were removed from their ancestral homelands in the American Southeast to what is now Oklahoma they had established a flourishing and dynamic culture. Their highly developed political organization encompassed a confederacy dynamic that brought together a diverse group of people into tribal towns dominated by Muscogee language and culture.[1] One of the physical manifestations of this culture and tradition is the Eastern Creek Council House. The Creek Council Houses were located at the center of the village, representing the pinnacle of political and ceremonial life. The Council house included an open area like a town square.[2] The council house was the place where leaders gathered to conduct town business. The open area of the complex was used for customary games and religious ceremonies.[3]

The Muscogee Creek maintained the integrity of their identity after removal to Oklahoma. They built communities in the image of the ones from their ancestral homeland. The Muscogee Creek sense of community and their political organization followed their people into Oklahoma. In 1867, the Creek Nation adopted a constitution that divided their territory into six districts, one of which was Eufaula.[4] The legacy of Eastern Creek Council Houses can be seen in the construction of the Creek National Council House[5], built in 1867 to serve as the national capitol for the Creeks. Although it is a stone building, not reflective of the traditional architecture, the notion and example of a physical center for the administration of the community and a central meeting place reflects the long enshrined traditions of the Muscogee Creek people.[6]

Bibliography

Corkan, David. *The Creek Frontier: 1540-1783*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1967, 16.

Isham, Theodore and Clark, Blue, "Creek (Mvskoke)," *The Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, www.okhistory.org (accessed October 26, 2017).

Muscogee Nation of Oklahoma. <http://www.genealogynation.com/creek> (accessed November 30, 2017).

The Muscogee (Creek) Nation. "Muscogee (Creek) Nation History." <http://www.mcn-nsn.gov/culturehistory/> (accessed November 20, 2017).

Photograph of Muscogee (Creek) Nation Council House. Muscogee Creek Nation Cultural Center. <http://creekculturalcenter.com/2014/05/muscogee-creek-nation-council-house/> accessed November 30, 2017.



Solomon McCombs's print of "Preparation for the Ribbon Dance" (1978)

Eufaula's Son Keeps Traditions Alive and Spreads Creek Culture – By Brittainy Boyer

The painting *Preparation for the Ribbon Dance* spotlights the dancers of the culturally important Ribbon Dance, Creek women and girls.[7] The Ribbon Dance is a contribution to the annual Green Corn Dances, which are held in thanks for a bountiful harvest.[8]

Solomon McCombs, a Muscogee Creek artist from Eufaula, OK, completed the painting *Preparation for the Ribbon Dance* in 1978.[9] McCombs's art captures the spirit and feeling of Creek culture, while at the same time working to preserve the culture.[10]

McCombs, who served as Vice Chief of the Creek Nation, strove to retain, preserve, and show that life still pulses through Native American culture.[11] McCombs's work can be found worldwide from the Gilcrease in Tulsa, Ok; and the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C.; to London and Madrid.[12]

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Mary Haas and James H. Hill, "Texts by J. Hill." In *Creek (Muskogee) Texts*, translated by Jack Martin, Margaret McKance Mauldin and Juanita McGirt. Oakland: University of California Press, 2015.

Secondary Sources

Dawley, Muriel and McLaughlin, Roberta, *American Indian Songs*. New York: Alfred Music, 1961.

Joyce, Maureen. "Solomon McCombs, Traditional Indian Artist, Dies." *The Washington Post*. November 21, 1980. Accessed November 30, 2017. https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/local/1980/11/21/solomon-mccombs-traditional-indian-artist-dies/75d81c3f-d9ae-4a7e-ba6d-f81090eb096e/?utm_term=.d919b62d9c80.

"Preparation for the Ribbon Dance." *Preparation for the Ribbon Dance / Solomon McCombs*. January 01, 2017. Accessed November 30, 2017. <https://collections.gilcrease.org/object/02271674>.

"Solomon McCombs." In *St. James Guide to Native North American Artists*, edited by Roger Matuz. Farmington Hills: St. James Press, 1998.

[1] The Muscogee (Creek) Nation. "Muscogee (Creek) Nation History." <http://www.mcn-nsn.gov/culturehistory/> (accessed November 20, 2017).

[2] David Corkan. *The Creek Frontier: 1540-1783*. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1967), 16.

[3] Theodore Isham and Blue Clark, "Creek (Mvskoke)," *The Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, www.okhistory.org (accessed October 26, 2017).

[4] Muscogee Nation of Oklahoma. <http://www.genealogynation.com/creek> (accessed November 30, 2017).

[5] Photograph of Muscogee (Creek) Nation Council House. Muscogee Creek Nation Cultural Center. <http://creekculturalcenter.com/2014/05/muscogee-creek-nation-council-house/> accessed November 30, 2017.

[6] Theodore Isham and Blue Clark, "Creek (Mvskoke)," *The Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*,

www.okhistory.org (accessed October 26, 2017).

[7] Mary Haas and James H. Hill, "Texts by J. Hill," in *Creek (Muskogee) Texts*, trans. Jack Martin and Margaret McKane Mauldin and Juanita McGirt (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015), 105-6.

[8] Muriel Dawley and Roberta McLaughlin, *American Indian Songs* (New York: Alfred Music, 1961), 31.

[9] "Preparation for the Ribbon Dance," Preparation for the Ribbon Dance / Solomon McCombs, January 01, 2017, accessed November 30, 2017, <https://collections.gilcrease.org/object/02271674>.

[10] "Solomon McCombs," in *St. James Guide to Native North American Artists*, ed. Roger Matuz (Farmington Hills: St. James Press, 1998) 367.

[11] Maureen Joyce, "Solomon McCombs, Traditional Indian Artist, Dies," The Washington Post, November 21, 1980, accessed November 30, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/local/1980/11/21/solomon-mccombs-traditional-indian-artist-dies/75d81c3f-d9ae-4a7e-ba6d-f81090eb096e/?utm_term=.d919b62d9c80.

[12] Ibid.

Student Reflections

Students also were asked to write a brief paragraph reflecting on the service-learning project. Some of their comments follow:

"This service learning project was not like any other project that I have had to participate in. This one made me dig deep into the history of artifacts from the past. One thing that I learned from this project is that not everything is what it seems. You may believe something about an item but haven't unraveled certain truths about it. Sometimes you have to do some research. I mean, I didn't know that the sewing machine was a big step forward for women and women's rights. I just thought that a sewing machine was nothing special."—Student 1

"It was interesting to learn all the history of Eufaula, such as the people that grew up there and where they came from or the change in time over construction and money. It was great getting to walk around main street and learn a little bit of history about the buildings, seeing the lake and learning just how big it really is, and getting to see all the historical artifacts from Eufaula was very interesting to learn about. Being able to learn the history of this small town in Oklahoma was a great opportunity. I have more of an understanding of how historiography works and the way things change over time."—Student 2

"The service-learning project was an amazing opportunity to be a part of. I knew college had its perks, but this was something that I mentioned to many other students, and they were amazed at what we could contribute to in the Eufaula area. I have never been in the Eufaula area before (only driving through), but being able to walk through the shops, and see how people lived in the area was a great experience."—Student 3

"I thought the service learning project was educational and different style of learning. We were required to search for different types of information to tell the history of an exhibit piece. . . . The Wolf Scarf was difficult to research about but I gained a better understanding of research."—Student 4

"The service learning project taught me to see inanimate objects as history and tie them to the larger picture of American history. At the beginning, I was concerned that my artifact was [too] specific to tie to American history. With your [the instructor's] help, I learned that I may not be able to directly tie my artifact to the

bigger picture, but there were other factors in between that formed a connection. I really enjoyed the service learning project because it is unlike anything I have done in any other classes and let us apply our skills as we learned and developed them. I understand that it may not be possible, but I would have liked to see and learn about my artifact and the Eufaula area before completing my final draft for the exhibition label, because I would have been able to add things that I learned during the excursion.”—Student 5

Share this:



Loading...

FOLLOW ME ON TWITTER

[My Tweets](#)

©COPYRIGHT FARINA KING

[BLOG AT WORDPRESS.COM.](#)

“In the museum, the learning is controlled first by a set of visitors who are asked to show Berenson one object they like the most in our experimental area but also one object they did not like (or found less interesting),” Vidal said in an interview with Vice’s Creators. “At the end of each day, Berenson has learned 10 to 20 statues, and for each of them, tenths of local views. Each local view is associated thanks to a classical conditioning mechanism to a positive, negative, or neutral value.” Accessibility is a major area that museums are trying to address in new and innovative ways. One example of how AI plays into this is The Museum of Tomorrow in Rio de Janeiro’s IRIS+ chatbot, which was introduced in 2017. The original IRIS came with the museum’s opening as its digital assistant. The lesson plan is about art and museums. Students have a lot of opportunities to express their likes and dislikes in these areas. The lesson plan is based on the TEDTalk by Amit Sood titled “Building a museum of museums on the web” about Google’s Art Project. The lesson itself is about art and museums. Students have a lot of opportunity for expressing likes and dislikes in these areas. Expressing likes and dislikes. The worksheet starts with a warm-up task. This is a discussion on statements on various aspects of museums. Students have to decide whether they agree with them or not. Then, they have to brainstorm phrases for expressing likes and dislikes which they will be using in a discussion about their interests in the This area is rich in history with many nearby historic sites and towns. The lake is nationally known for it's bass and crappie fishing. The lock, located at Ft. Eufaula National Wildlife Refuge is located on the northern end of the lake offering excellent bird viewing all year. There are both state and Corps of Engineers operated campgrounds and day use parks featuring picnic areas, beaches and boat ramps, among other opportunities. Lake Eufaula was formed with the construction of the Walter F. George Dam in 1962. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (CE) built the dam to provide flood control, navigation, hydroelectric