



Creole Heritage Center

NORTHWESTERN STATE UNIVERSITY

Recent & Upcoming Activities for December 2023

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2023 Year in Review

2023 was a year of reinvigoration, visibility, and celebration for the Center. It began with gathering long-time and new supporters together to develop a strategic plan to guide the Center in its immediate future and near the end we toasted to the 25th anniversary of the Center opening its doors. More details about these milestones are provided later in this newsletter. In-between these milestones we continued to advocate for and educate others on the Center and Louisiana Creoles through our social media and at a variety of events throughout Louisiana. Some of our favorite events included:

- **February:** N'Side View (NSU's Perspective Student Day) (Natchitoches)
- **March:** Presenting on the Center's history at the Louisiana Historical Association's annual conference (Alexandria)
- **April:** Alexandria Genealogical Society Meeting & Louisiana History Museum's Cohon de Lait (Alexandria)
- **May:** Learning about ways to digitize and share the Center's holdings at the Louisiana Digital Library Fest (Baton Rouge)
- **June:** C.R.E.O.L.E., Inc and partners' Créole Culture Day at Vermilionville (Lafayette)
- **July:** Louisiana Folklife Center's 43rd Annual Natchitoches-NSU Folk Festival (Natchitoches) – including a narrative session on quilting with representatives of the St. Augustine (Isle Brevelle) Catholic Church's Confraternity of Christian Mothers Quilting Committee; serving as a judge for the Gumbo Cookoff; and having information on the Center in the [festival's program book](#)!
- **August:** Oral History Planning Workshop (LSU – Baton Rouge)
- **September & October:** Elemental Threads: Contemporary Works by Angelbert Metoyer, Annie Moran, and Ayo Scott art exhibition (Natchitoches)
- **October:** Cheers to 25 Years! 25th Anniversary Kickoff Soirée, Open House, and Honoring Nicol and FJ Delphin as Louisiana Tradition Bearers (with Louisiana Folklife Center) (Natchitoches) & St. Augustine Catholic Church's Annual Creole Festival (Isle Brevelle)
- **November:** Co-Sponsoring and Presenting at Louisiana Creole Research Association's 19th Annual Conference (New Orleans)



Left to Right: Attendees at Cheers to 25 Years! 25th Anniversary Kick-Off Soirée on 10/12/23; Honoring 2023 Louisiana Tradition Bearers: Nicol and FJ Delphin with NSU's Louisiana Folklife Center on 10/21/23; Dr. Peacock, CHC Director, presenting at 19th Annual Louisiana Creole Research Association Conference on 11/12/23 (New Orleans, LA).

Help us Thank Ms. Chevalier!

If you have ever sought out help from the Center with your genealogy, chances are you have connected with Ms. Shirley Dunn Chevalier. It is because of her, along with previous Center staff Ms. Louise Llorens and Ms. Janet Ravare-Colson, that the Center has collected and verified so much genealogical information. The Center will forever be grateful for her meticulous work to preserve and educate others about Louisiana Creoles and their families.

This December marks the end of Ms. Chevalier's time with the Center. We will miss having her and her wealth of knowledge of Creole genealogy in our office.

It would be difficult to count the number of individuals she has helped throughout her years at the Center, but we would love to hear your stories and all comments of gratitude for her work. We will be collecting them through the end of January so we can present them to her as a collective gift of thanks.



Send your stories and thanks to
creolecenter@nsula.edu
 or via mail to the Center
 at NSU Box 5675
 Natchitoches, LA 71497

Support the Creole Heritage Center!

The Center receives financial support for salaries and infrastructure through Northwestern State University, but we rely on the financial support of others to:

- Accomplish our Education, Event & Experiences, Exhibit, and Resource Services Initiatives identified in our 2023-2026 Strategic Plan
- Increase accessibility to our resources & programs via communication & technology improvements
- Improve collaboration across Creole communities & organizations to empower all Louisiana Creoles

Become a member for 2024 online at <https://www.northwesternstatealumni.com/creole> or visit the "Donations" page on our [website](https://www.northwesternstatealumni.com/creole) for a paper donation form!

Business/Organization Sponsorships are also available using the online or paper forms linked to above. All sponsors will have their logos prominently displayed on our website and recognized in publications (like these newsletters!). Additional recognition/terms of sponsorship – as well as sponsoring specific events or initiatives – can be explored. Just give the Center a call!

Creating & Jumpstarting Our 2023-2026 Strategic Plan

From March to June, Center staff, its Advisory Council, and numerous NSU and cultural heritage, political, education, and economic leaders near Natchitoches collaborated to produce a strategic plan to steer the Center over the next few years. They began with producing a revised and more succinct mission statement and an articulated vision and core values for the Center. The work continued to identify goals in four “Programs & Services” areas and additional ones for the day-to-day operations of the Center. All are encouraged to review all these goals on the Strategic Plan page of the [Center's website](#).

The Center is able to jumpstart several of its Program & Services goals next month due to an unexpected appropriation of **\$100,000** from the state of Louisiana – the largest, non-salary designated appropriation in the Center's history. The Center is grateful to NSU President Dr. Marcus Jones, Chairman of the Louisiana Legislative Black Caucus Vincent J. Pierre, Louisiana Senator Louie Bernard, and others for their work in obtaining this support. We greatly look forward in 2024 to sharing progress of projects under our Education and Resource Services areas, as well as communications and technological improvements.

The creation of the plan was graciously funded by the [Cane River National Heritage Area](#).

An October to Remember!

The Louisiana Legislature first designated October as Creole Heritage Month during its Regular Session in 2005 via a Concurrent Resolution brought forward by Representative T. Taylor Townsend. This recognition took on additional meaning in 2023 as the year marked the 25th anniversary of the Center opening its doors. Louisiana Governor John Bel Edwards, the Louisiana Senate via Senator Louie Bernard, and Mayor Ronnie Williams, Jr. and the City of Natchitoches all sent the Center Commendations to recognize both occasions. Official copies of all three are on display at the Center.



Attendees at Cheers to 25 Years: 25th Anniversary Kick-Off Soirée on 10/12/23

The Center held three events in the month to mark this time of celebration and honor the past and future of the Center. On October 12th, friends and supporters from near and far enjoyed a variety of hors d'oeuvres, desserts, and drinks; music from some of NSU's superbly talented students; and fellowship with friends old and new at our Cheers to 25 Years! 25th Anniversary Kickoff Soirée. Attendees also ventured to the “Elemental Threads” art exhibition of three Creole-connected artists organized by the Center and displayed in NSU's Orville J. Hanchey Gallery. Visitors over the exhibition's seven-week mounting admired the vibrant work of Angelbert Metoyer, Annie Moran, and Ayo Scott. An artists' talk and closing reception to honor these three contemporary artists was also held at the end of the month.



The Center opened its own doors on October 13th to show off its newly organized office and exhibit spaces. These improvements – including creating a doorway between two of the Center's rooms and displaying photographs and artwork, Center event memorabilia, and other objects representing Creole heritage – are the beginning of a new visitor experience. We look forward to making additional improvements in the new year, particularly researching and writing labels for all items on display so all

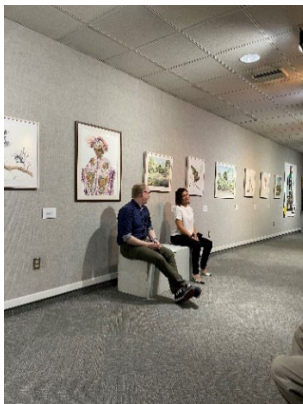
Creole Heritage Center exhibits on 10/13/23 visitors leave with a fuller understanding of the rich and personal history of Louisiana Creoles.

Advisory Council Update

The Advisory Council exists to advise the Center's Director and support the Center in reaching its mission and goals. Members took an extra active role this year through devoting time to the development of the Center's 2023-2026 Strategic Plan. One goal of the plan is to strengthen and develop the Advisory Council by recruiting new members so all available seats are filled. The Council achieved part of this goal by excitedly welcoming four new members in October, Carla Roque Allen, Pharm.D., of Maumelle, AR; Blaise LaCour of Natchitoches, LA; Dr. Christophe Landry of Salt Lake City, UT; and Ashley Porche-Tassin of Baton Rouge, LA.

To honor the many past members of the Advisory Council, the Council in October also voted to establish an Emeritus Member designation open to previous and still living voting members. Emeritus Members will be kept informed on Advisory Council meetings and related communication, but have no attendance or other responsibilities like active, voting members. Continuing such communication will hopefully allow the Center to better retain institutional knowledge and assistance from some of our most devoted supporters.

The Emeritus Member designation is well deserved for all, and was particularly welcome for recognizing those members, including a few who had severed since the Center began, who stepped down from the Advisory Council in the past three years: Curtis Bordenave, Jr.; Dr. Kathleen (Kass) Byrd, Annie Mario Domino, Kathleen Balthazar Heitzmann, Theresa Delphin Morgan, Mary Metoyer Rodriguez, and Vera Severin.



Left to Right: Artist Annie Moran being interviewed by Dr. Peacock, CHC Director on 10/28/23 as part of "Elemental Threads" Exhibition; Senator Louie Bernard presents Dr. Peacock with the commendations for Creole Heritage Month from Louisiana on 10/12/23; CHC Advisory Council and CHC partners at 6/11/23 meeting (Natchitoches, LA).

Our Vision

To revitalize, mobilize, and empower, for global recognition, Creole people and their contributions.

Our Mission

To preserve, educate, and advocate the value and significance of the vibrant Louisiana Creole people and their culture.

Supporting the Center

Become a member for 2024 online at <https://www.northwesternstatealumni.com/creole> or visit the "Donations" page on our [website](#) for a paper donation form!

*Donations are processed through the NSU Foundation & Alumni Association for the sole use of the Creole Heritage Center. Gifts made to the NSU Foundation are tax deductible to the extent permitted by law. The NSU Foundation is exempt from tax under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Its Federal Identification Number is 72-6021495.

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The CHC is a proud component of NSU's School of Social Sciences and Applied Programs.

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