



# Creole Heritage Center

## NORTHWESTERN STATE UNIVERSITY

January 2024  
Newsletter

### 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.*

### 2023 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's immediate future and near its end we toasted to the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Center opening its doors. 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 Cochon 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)

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Photos from Cheers to 25 Years! 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Kick-Off Soirée on 10/12/23



Front page of the Center's 2023-2026 Strategic Plan

### Our 2023-2026 Strategic Plan

From March to June 2023, Center staff, its Advisory Council, and numerous NSU, cultural heritage, political, education, and economic leaders near Natchitoches collaborated to produce a strategic plan to rejuvenate and steer the Center over the next few years. We began with producing a revised and more succinct mission statement and an articulated vision and core values for the Center. (See the top of this newsletter!)

We then incorporated feedback from our public surveys done in 2022 to identify numerous goals in four "Programs & Services" areas and for the internal day-to-day operations of the Center. Everyone is encouraged to review the full Strategic Plan on the Center's website ([www.nsula.edu/creole](http://www.nsula.edu/creole)) under "Strategic Plan"!

### Support the Creole Heritage Center in 2024!

The Center receives financial support for salaries and infrastructure through NSU, but we rely on the financial support of businesses, organizations, and people like you 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 and donate to the Center** by filling out a paper donation form or donating online at

<https://www.northwesternstatealumni.com/creole!>



## Thank You Shirley!

For much of the Center's history, Ms. Shirley Dunn Chevalier has been a familiar face in our Genealogy Department. 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. Ms. Chevalier ended her time with the Center in December, although we bet she isn't fully stepping away from researching genealogy! It would be difficult to count the number of individuals she has helped throughout her years at the Center and the Center forever will be thankful for all that she did.

### 2023 in review (cont.)

- **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 and serving as a judge for the Gumbo Cookoff
- **August:** Oral History Project 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)

More details on many of these events are available in the newsletters and pages on our website at [www.nsula.edu/creole](http://www.nsula.edu/creole)!

### Advisory Council Updates

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 with 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 much 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 still living, previous voting members. Emeritus

Members will be kept informed on Advisory Council meetings and related communication, but have no required responsibilities like voting members. Continuing such communication hopefully will 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 particularly welcome for recognizing those members who stepped down from the Advisory Council in the past three years, including a few who had served since the Center began: Curtis Bordenave, Jr.; Dr. Kathleen (Kass) Byrd, Anne Marie Domino, Kathleen Balthazar Heitzmann, Theresa Delphin Morgan, Mary Metoyer Rodriguez, and Vera Severin.

### The Center's New Look!

The Center welcomed visitors in October 2023 to show off its newly organized office and exhibit spaces. These improvements – including creating a doorway between two of the Center's rooms and (re)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 visitors leave with a fuller understanding of the rich and personal history of Louisiana Creoles.



The Center's offices under renovation in August 2023!

### What's to Come in 2024???

Priorities in 2024 include:

- Starting many of our strategic plan's Education goals
- Expanding Creole-relevant resources on our website
- Growing relationships with existing Creole organizations and communities
- Increasing accessibility of the Center's past resources
- Cataloging all of the Center's holdings
- Purchasing updated Collections Management Software
- Acquiring up-to-date communications and donation tracking software
- Communicating consistently with our supporters
- Participating in events like the Natchitoches-NSU Folk Festival and Louisiana Studies Conference (both with the Louisiana Folklife Center)
- Promoting Creole-relevant events on our social media