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Office of University Communications

October 10, 2012

Cherokee Academic Conference, Writer's Meeting and Film Festival Featured

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C. – The culture, literature, and traditions of the Cherokee people will be showcased this week as part of the Southern Appalachian Culture Series (SACS), to be held Oct. 12-13 in Boiling Springs, N.C.

The weekend's activities will kick off with the Southern Appalachian Culture Film Festival from Oct. 8 – 11. In partnership with the Cleveland County Arts Council's Real to Reel Film Festival, each night, films will be shown that highlight aspects of life in the Southern Appalachian region. Screenings will be shown each night at 7 p.m. in the Time Warner Cable Theater, inside the Tucker Student Center, located on the campus of Gardner-Webb University.

The Appalachian Writer's Association will convene their annual meeting at 4:30 p.m. on Friday, Oct. 12. That evening, a dinner will be offered at a cost of \$20 per person and will feature elements of a traditional Cherokee menu, and officials from AWA will present annual writing awards, including Appalachian Book of the Year.

Later on Friday, conference participants will be joined by members of the community on the first floor patio outside the Tucker Student Center for Cherokee storytelling by Freeman Owle with featured music by flutist Matthew Tooni, also a Cherokee. Born in on the Qualla Indian Boundary, home of the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Nation, Owle attended Gardner-Webb before earning two degrees at Western Carolina University. He has since earned acclaim as a lecturer, historian, educator, storyteller, and champion of the Cherokee heritage. Attendees can expect to hear traditional Cherokee myths and children's fables during the 8:30 p.m. presentation, which is free and open to the public.

A range of regional scholars will offer academic presentations throughout the Saturday conference sessions. A panel discussion is planned free of charge from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. in Ritch Banquet Hall of the Dover Campus Center on the topic "Cherokee Life in the 21st Century." Panel experts include Cherokee leaders Owle, Casey Cooper, GWU alum and CEO of Cherokee Indian Hospital; Chief Justice William Boyum; and Terri Henry, a Cherokee attorney. Dr. Nancy Bottoms, assistant professor at GWU and an organizer of the SACS conference, believes the panel will help shed light on daily life as a member of the Cherokee nation.

“These are people who live and work in the same world as other Americans,” said Bottoms. “But their culture is not the sole definition of who they are. The Cherokee embrace and contribute to the 21st century while also embracing their heritage.”

Through the various events, organizers hope to educate and inform the conference participants while celebrating the history and culture of the Native American people. “The deeply embedded stereotypes of Cherokee culture, and any Native American culture, are hard to erase,” said Bottoms. “Our need to understand this oldest identified southern Appalachian society is an echo of the Cherokee’s desire to educate others about their deep roots, values, and traditions.”

From 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturday, the Boiling Springs Town Museum will host a free pottery demonstration for kids in the community. Participants will get a chance to learn more about how to create items on a potter’s wheel and kids will get an opportunity to try it themselves.

Several highlighted events are being offered free to members of the public, including the pre-event film festival, the Friday evening storytelling, and Saturday’s panel discussion and pottery demonstration. The full SACS conference is open to anyone who wants to attend. The cost is \$90, with a discounted rate of \$50 for students, independent scholars, high school teachers, and retired faculty. For more information or to register, visit soappculture.com.