

Native American Heritage Month

MOUNDBUILDERS



Hand Cutout,
Ohio Historical Society,
Photograph by John
Bigelow Taylor




**THE
OKLAHOMAN**

Newspapers for this educational program provided by:

**AMERICAN INDIAN
CULTURAL CENTER & MUSEUM**

A project of the Native American Cultural & Educational Authority



The American Indian Cultural Center and Museum (AICCM) is honored to present, in partnership with Newspapers In Education at *The Oklahoman*, the Native American Heritage educational supplement. The Native American Heritage educational supplements will focus on the cultures, histories and governments of the American Indian tribes of Oklahoma. The supplements will be published twice a year, around November and April. Each supplement will be organized into four core thematic areas: Origins, Native Knowledge, Community and Governance. Because it is impossible to cover every aspect of the topics featured in each edition, we hope the supplements will comprehensively introduce readers to a variety of new subjects and ideas. We hope you will be inspired to research and find out more information with the help of your teachers and parents as well as through your own independent research.

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Cover art: America Meredith, “Gimme Me That Ole’ Time Religion”

Inside cover art: Brent Greenwood, “Medicine Birds”

On the cover is a birdman, an important, recurring figure in moundbuilder art and culture. Because this image of the birdman appeared so often on art objects throughout the moundbuilder periods, we know that he must have played a very important role in the culture. It is believed by some that birdman was a winged human figure representing a warrior or chunky game player. The birdman seems to be a supernatural being connected with the sky, the Upperworld and the male virtues of warfare and high-stakes competition. Try to find all the birdman images in this student supplement as you work through it.

AICCM Mission Statement: To serve as a living center for cultural expression promoting awareness and understanding for all people regarding Oklahoma American Indian cultures and heritage.

Oklahoma has a unique story and a history that differentiates it from any other state in the nation. Nowhere else in the U.S. can a visitor hear firsthand accounts from 39 different American Indian Tribal Nations regarding their journey from ancestral homelands, or discover how Native peoples have contributed and woven their identities into the fabric of contemporary Oklahoma. The American Indian Cultural Center and Museum (AICCM) will be a “living cultural space” featuring modern-day expressions of 30 Tribal Nations. It will provide visitors a rare opportunity to be immersed in traditional celebrations, contemporary events and activities both inside the cultural center and across a 300-acre Cultural Park. The AICCM is currently under construction at the intersection of Interstates 35 and 40 in Oklahoma City. We invite you to learn more about the American Indian Cultural Center and Museum at www.aiccm.org.

Yakoke! (Thank You!)

Gena Timberman, Executive Director

Moundbuilder Art



Engraved Whelk Shell with Two Intertwined Snake Men, *National Museum of the American Indian*



Effigy Pipe of a Seated Male Figure (Morning Star or Redhorn), *University of Arkansas Museum*



Deer Mask, *National Museum of the American Indian*



Kneeling Ancestor, *University of Tennessee Frank H. McClung Museum*



Frog Effigy Jar, *National Museum of the American Indian*



Engraved Shell Gorget, *National Museum of the American Indian*

Photographs by John Bigelow Taylor

Theme Introduction

When you think of American Indians, what comes to mind? Do you think of great leaders living atop high, terraced mounds with servants and ruling over thousands of citizens? Do you think of them as wearing tall, elaborate copper headdresses instead of feathers? Instead of on horseback, do you think of important leaders traveling in “carrying chairs” on the shoulders of servants? What about traders traveling thousands of miles along rivers and ocean coasts by boats 40 feet long with sails? Do these questions sound like what you know about American Indians? Welcome to the world of MOUNDBUILDERS!

For more than 3,000 years, the American Indians associated with the mounds were part of a highly sophisticated culture, one that can be compared to the great civilizations of Rome, Greece and Asia. Moundbuilder cultures were made up of a confederation of American Indian groups that shared similar cultural values and beliefs. The name “moundbuilder” comes from the unique and diverse earthen mounds they built throughout their territory. It is from these mounds that we have learned most of the moundbuilder cultural information we know today.

Throughout the southeastern and mid-western regions of the U.S. reaching from Florida to Pennsylvania to Wisconsin to Oklahoma, closely networked villages were connected by four major metropolitan moundbuilder cities: Cahokia, Illinois; Moundville, Alabama; Etowah, Georgia; and Spiro, Oklahoma. These large cities had populations of up to 20,000 people at their most populous times. In fact, in 1290 Cahokia boasted a population larger than London. The Mississippian moundbuilder cultures thrived for more than 1,000 years - at least six times as long as the U.S. has been in existence. At its height, the Mississippian era, the total moundbuilder population exceeded 1 million.

This publication will explore the intriguing moundbuilder cultures through several cultural vignettes. We encourage you to learn more about these cultures and people on your own. One great way to start is by visiting the Spiro Archeological Park located right here in Oklahoma! The Spiro Mounds site is situated on the banks of the Arkansas River in LeFlore County. Known as one of the most important archaeological sites in the world, Spiro is sometimes referred to as the “King Tut of the West” because of the amount and quality of cultural objects that were found there. The Spiro Mounds were not only part of a large city, but also a destination for people from hundreds of miles away to come for trade; technological advances; religious renewal; and scientific discoveries in medicine, astronomy and agriculture. Today, the Spiro Mounds site is Oklahoma’s only prehistoric Native American archeological park.

Origins

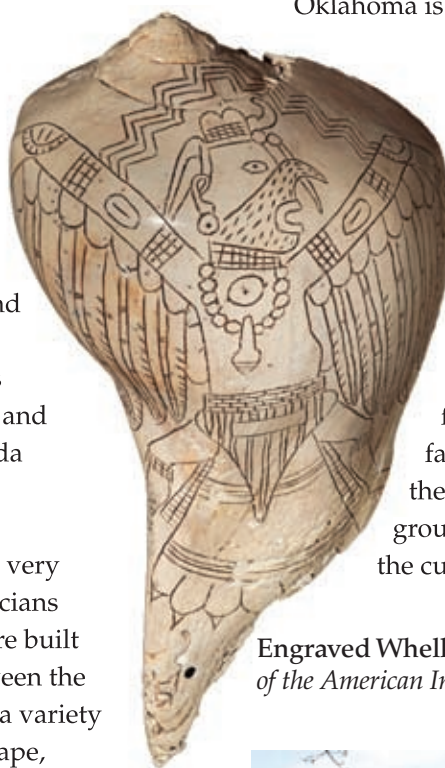
At different times throughout history, people around the world have built mounds. Mound building in the U.S. seemed to occur whenever a very stable weather pattern would allow for large amounts of food to be grown for a long period of time. This abundance of food led to population growth and the development of cities with powerful leaders who orchestrated economic, political, social and religious expansion. It appears that the longer the weather pattern held, the larger the population became and the more likely that mound building would start and spread.

Mound building has occurred several times throughout history in the U.S. Near 2000 B.C.E. until weather patterns shifted and food supplies decreased, the Archaic period of mound building took place in northern Louisiana and southern Arkansas. Then between 200 B.C.E. and 300 C.E. came the Woodland period of mound building in the Ohio River Valley. Finally, the longest running and most widespread mound building period was the Mississippian period, which ran from the years 850 through 1500. Mississippian sites were located along practically every major river system and coastline from Oklahoma to Virginia and from the Florida Keys to the Great Lakes.

Mounds were not built at random, but rather were built very deliberately under the guidance of architects and technicians using millions of basket-loads of dirt. Most mounds were built in layers with as much as a hundred years passing between the completions of each layer. Mounds were constructed in a variety of shapes and sizes. Some were mere hills on the landscape, while others were large enough to resemble small mountains. Monks Mound at Cahokia in Illinois was continuously added to by building over older mounds for centuries, which was common practice. This mound has a base and volume larger than Khufu, the largest pyramid in Egypt. Unique mounds created in the shape of animals, found mainly in the Ohio River Valley, are particularly interesting because their shapes can only be seen from the air.

Mounds were also used to track alignments of the movement of the sun, moon and stars. Today, these mounds tell us that there was a long history of moundbuilders observing and documenting astronomy.

Why did these ancient people build mounds? Mound building is really a type of building similar to the pyramids in Egypt and Mexico. Mounds provide a way of separating leaders from the general public, like a judge that sits above the rest of the court. Flat-topped pyramid or temple mounds were constructed so that leaders could build their houses and temples on top of the mounds as a symbol of their high status and a platform from which to lead ceremonies and civic gatherings. One of the most important reasons mounds were built was to provide long-lasting structures to bury the elite and serve as monuments to their memory. Craig Mound at the Spiro site in Oklahoma is an example of a Mississippian burial mound.



So what happened to the moundbuilders in Oklahoma? The armadillo is a unique messenger that may offer a clue about what happened. Armadillos are indigenous to Texas. Around the time when the armadillo shows up in artwork at Spiro is approximately the same time that cultural activity at Spiro starts to decline. In the 1300s, there was a nationwide change in rainfall patterns. This change caused the armadillo to move north in search of food and water. The drought caused widespread crop failure, resulting in food shortages. People abandoned their large cities and populous villages to live in smaller groups as a means to better provide for one another, and so the culture of the Mississippian peoples broke apart.

Engraved Whelk Shell Depicting Birdman, *National Museum of the American Indian, Photograph by John Bigelow Taylor*



Etowah Mounds, Cartersville, Georgia

Over time, from these smaller groups, new tribal identities began to emerge. The following modern-day tribes belong to moundbuilder cultures: Absentee Shawnee, Alabama Quassarte Tribal Town, Caddo, Cherokee,

During the 1800s, as a result of Indian removal, many of these tribes were forced to leave their homelands. However, many tribal communities pilgrimage back to their homelands to visit the mound sites and honor the great legacy left by their ancestors.



- 1) On a U.S. map, find the major cities close to the four significant moundbuilder sites that are indicated with stars on the map to the left.
- 2) Locate the major rivers that flow through the region; locate where the rivers connect and discuss how these connections influenced moundbuilder cultures.
- 3) Figure the distances between each of the large mound cities by car. What is the distance traveled from one site to the next? What is the total distance? Now plot out a route by river or coastline.

The Oklahoman!



Serpent Mound, Peebles, Ohio

Native Knowledge

Vocabulary:

Iconography: *The branch of art history which studies the identification, description and interpretation of images.*

Cosmology: *The study and belief of the universe in its totality, including humanity's role in the universe.*

World view: *Model of the world that makes sense of the world to its followers.*

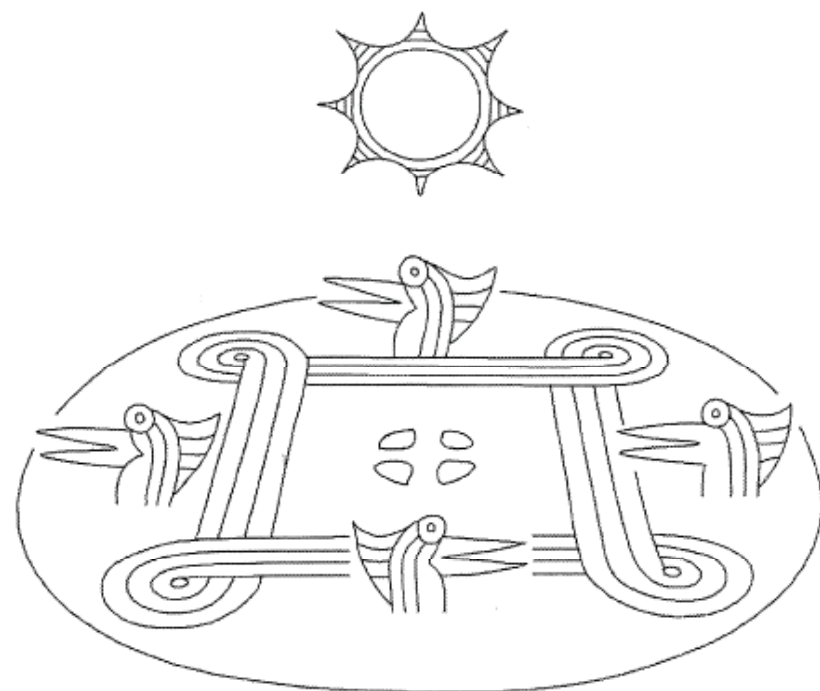
Much of what we know today about the moundbuilders comes from studying the sites where those Native people once lived and the cultural material they left behind. The moundbuilders left evidence of their world view through the iconography that we see depicted on many of the cultural objects they made. It is believed that the people who lived in the moundbuilder societies saw their world in three parts, sometimes called a “tripartite cosmos.” In this world view, there was an Underworld, an Upperworld and Middle World (the Middle World is sometimes known as This World, the world we live in). Their three-part cosmos is represented by the engraved design on this shell gorget that was uncovered in Tennessee.



Engraved Shell Gorget, National Museum of the American Indian, Photograph by John Bigelow Taylor

Here is a shortened version of the Caddo origins story, which explains their origins and introduces their world view. Caddo people are considered to be descendents of or related to the people who lived at and around the Spiro Mounds.

A long time ago, men and animals were brothers and lived together below the ground. One day, a man named Neesh (Moon), discovered the entrance to a cave leading up to the earth's surface. Neesh told everyone they would have to follow him to the new land. The people divided into groups, each with a leader and a drum. Neesh told the people to sing and beat their drums as they moved along, and he warned them never to look back the way they had come. Soon they reached the opening. First an old man climbed out, carrying fire and a pipe in one hand and a drum in the other. Next came his wife, bringing corn and pumpkin seeds. Then came more people and animals. But when Wolf climbed out he turned around and looked back. The opening closed, shutting the rest of the people and animals under the ground, where they still remain. Those who had come out into the world of light sat down and cried for their friends left below in the world of darkness. Because their ancestors came out of the ground, the Caddos call the Middle World ina'—Mother—and return to it when they die.



Engraved Shell Gorget, Illustration by Elizabeth Reese Baloutine



The cross and circle usually symbolize the sacred fire that can exist in the Under, Upper or Middle World.



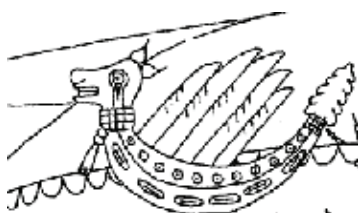
The cedar tree, or "world tree," may have been seen as a connection among all three worlds.

The human hand with an eye gazing out from the palm may suggest a portal to the Otherworld, or may represent the constellation Orion.



This birdman is associated with the Upperworld because of its wings, feathers, forked eye and beak.

The serpent symbol usually has horns and wings, but has also been portrayed as an underwater panther. It is believed that it was a powerful monster of the Underworld and was constantly at battle with the forces of the Upperworld.



Activities:

To the left are descriptions of some of the iconography included in the Mississippian Cosmology illustration below.

- 1) Find and circle the icons in the diagram that match the definitions.
- 2) How does understanding the definitions of the iconography in the illustration help you to better understand what is being told in the overall composition?
- 3) Create a story using iconography you create about your personal world view.

Look for additional activities in Native American Heritage: Moundbuilders Lesson 2 in *The Oklahoman*!



Community

Community life was the foundation of the American Indian mound building people. Without community support, the amazing art, homes, mounds, temples and life-sustaining crops they produced would not have been possible. Similar to our communities of today, people then often lived close together, worked together and attended community events, games and rituals together.

What would it have been like to live in a community like this? Imagine that you were living almost 1,000 years ago, right here in Oklahoma at the site we now call the Spiro Mounds. Like most Mississippian cultures, the people of Spiro lived in houses made of clay walls covered with grass and topped with reed-thatched roofs. The houses consisted of a large open room with elevated platforms lining the walls for storage and sleeping. In the center of the room was a fire pit used for cooking, heating and lighting. The architecture and materials allowed heat to stay in during the cooler months and cool air to stay in during the warmer months.

The heart of the Spiro site is a group of nine mounds surrounding an oval plaza. Brown Mound, the largest platform mound, is located on the eastern side of the plaza. Atop Brown Mound, the town's elite carried out complex rituals, centered especially on the deaths and burials of Spiro's powerful rulers. Brown Mound was also the main Temple Mound. There would have been a building located on top of this mound that was like a blend of a house of worship, a capitol building and a courthouse. Most of the



decisions for the region and most ceremonies would take place in this building. This was also where a sacred First Fire would always be burning as a link between This World and the Upperworld.

Standing on top of Brown Mound about 1,000 years ago, you could see that the surrounding city covers several miles. The city is noisy with



View of Cahokia Market, Cahokia Mounds Historic Site, Painting by Michael Hampshire



Community Life at Cahokia, Cahokia Mounds Historic Site, Painting by Michael Hampshire

voices, dogs and children. The women and children tend to the farms. Village women at home are working to make clothing and grinding seeds for the next meal. While they work, they keep a watchful eye on the children playing nearby. Some men, busy cutting down trees and brush, stop and look up as a group of warriors return from hunting, carrying a deer and several fat, young turkeys. As the triumphant hunters enter the village, a priest of the Raccoon Clan emerges from the Brown Mound temple to utter a blessing. Wearing copper and shell ornaments, and with intricate tattoos on his chest and face, the priest shows everyone that he is a leader among the Mississippian people and that he speaks with authority, even to the gods.

Out on the banks of the Arkansas River, a group of people are boarding a large boat with tall sails. They are traveling to Etowah Mounds, which is in present-day Georgia. Departing for a six-week trip, the travelers will journey a course down the Arkansas River to the Mississippi River to the Gulf of Mexico, then on to the Atlantic Ocean around present-day Florida and into Georgia, finally following land trails to arrive at the Mississippian site of Etowah. While in Etowah they will trade, participate in ceremonies and fellowship with friends and relatives. Mississippian people considered rivers and oceans

as “highways” connecting them to other mound villages and cities. The Ohio, Tennessee, Red and Mississippi Rivers and their tributaries connected virtually all of the Mississippian cultures.

Creative expression was very important to all the moundbuilder cultures. It was the Mississippians, especially at Spiro, whose artisans created some of the most impressive and illustrative works in Native American history. Moundbuilders adorned themselves with jewelry made from freshwater pearls, copper and shells. Other important art forms included engraving conch, whelk or lighting shells; elaborate feather work; pottery and stone works of humans and animals; and masterful metalwork. Moundbuilders were also skilled wood carvers and textile weavers. Because these objects were made of organic materials, few of these works survive today.



Aerial Perspective of Cahokia Mounds, Cahokia Mounds Historic Site, Painting by William R. Iseninger

Community

Posketv: Green Corn

A Cultural Tradition of New Year and Renewal

America is home to countless New Year celebration customs and traditions. The Jewish New Year for example, Rosh Hashanah, takes place in the fall. Known as the birthday of the world, Jewish families go to synagogue. A rabbi (Jewish spiritual leader) blows into a shofar (ram's horn), and they all pray for the well being of the world community and for their own health, happiness and spiritual growth. Some people in India celebrate the Diwali Festival during November's new moon. They light oil lamps for Lakshmi, the goddess who symbolizes wealth and prosperity, and place the lamps in windows, on doors, roofs and porches, and even float them on lakes and rivers. The people of India believe they will have good luck if the lamps stay lit until they have floated away. These types of traditional celebrations are important to the cultural vitality of communities.

The American Indians who were part of the moundbuilder cultures also had a tradition of celebrating the New Year, a tradition that in many ways continues to be practiced today by their descendants. Green Corn is an ancient New Year tradition. Many different tribes celebrate Green Corn. "Posketv" (Bus-get-uh) means "to fast" (not eat) and is a Green Corn New Year tradition celebrated by the Muscogee (Creek)

tribe. Posketv takes place during several days in the summer at the time when the corn is starting to ripen. Green Corn, or Posketv, is a festive time for the community to come together and celebrate the new beginnings of social, spiritual and community renewal through praying, dancing, eating and stickball games. An important dance to Posketv is the fast-paced stomp dance. Men and women of all ages participate in the stomp dance. Another important tradition is to extinguish an old fire and rekindle a new one with the old one's coals. Many tribes who



Ribbon Dance, Photograph by Tom Fields (Creek/Cherokee)

were relocated to Oklahoma were faced with the traumatic situation of losing their ancient fire, which for many tribes is as old as the tribe itself. During removal, many tribes decided to bring their fire from their homelands to Oklahoma. People carried burning embers or coals in buffalo horns, kettles or other vessels. Upon arrival to Oklahoma, tribes set up new ceremonial grounds where the traditions are continued today. The survival of the fire is an added reason to celebrate Green Corn.



Ashley and Eden McIntosh, *Photograph by Nancy Fields*

Loretta Francis (of Creek, Caddo, Pawnee, Delaware and Chickasaw descent) and her daughters Eden McIntosh, 12, and Ashley McIntosh, 15 (who also have Seminole ancestry), celebrate Posketv. Here, they share with us their New Year tradition.

AICCM: Loretta, why is it important for you to celebrate the Green Corn tradition with your community?

Loretta: It is very important to celebrate Posketv because it keeps our community going.

AICCM: Where do you celebrate Posketv?

Loretta: Our family celebrates at our ceremonial grounds called Tvlvhasse (Tallahassee) in Oklahoma.

AICCM: Are there any special traditions that you do to prepare for Posketv?

Loretta: Yes, starting January 1, our family fasts from eating corn until Posketv in July. It is important because it reminds us personally that every time we crave corn it represents our home we gave up, where we come from and it represents the strength it took to survive in order for us to be here as heirs to this gift of life.

AICCM: Eden, what are some of your favorite things to do at Posketv?

Eden: I enjoy stomp dancing. It is important to be able to dance fast; you just go out there and have fun. I also enjoy the ribbon dance. It is very beautiful. Women are the first to come out and hang ribbons everywhere as part of the dance. I like getting to see my friends and family I haven't seen in a while.

AICCM: Ashley, How do you feel when you participate in the Posketv celebration?

Ashley: I really like participating. I look forward to it every year. It makes me feel good. It makes me feel closer to God. It makes me feel more Creek.

AICCM: Do any people at the celebration speak Muscogee (Creek)? Do you speak Muscogee?

Eden: (Shakes her head "no.") I like to listen to the older people speak. I can't understand what they are saying, but I like it.

Ashley: It's amazing that it (Muscogee language) is so old and it's still here. Hearing elders talk Creek makes me want to learn to speak my language.

AICCM: You participate in the Green Corn purification tradition of getting small, shallow scratches on your arms (as shown to the left) and legs. Why is this important to you?

Ashley: I feel like I should do it. It purifies me for the New Year. People ask, "Why do you put yourself through that? Does it hurt?" I tell them it's my choice. We don't have to do it, but I want to because it makes me stronger.

AICCM: How do you feel about continuing a long legacy of your cultural heritage?

Eden: It feels good. I am going to make my children participate and I am going to make my grandchildren participate, and even their children. Green Corn helps me feel proud of who I am.

Activities:

- 1) Think about annual celebrations or events you participate in with your family and community. When you participate do you feel a sense of tradition and fellowship? Do you learn more about your family and community when you participate?
- 2) Think of your favorite annual celebration. Write down the things you look forward to regarding the celebration.
- 3) Find a schoolmate who celebrates at least one different celebration than you do, or that celebrates a particular event in a different way than you do. What can you learn about another culture or tradition from this?

Look for additional activities in Native American Heritage: Moundbuilders Lesson 3 in *The Oklahoman!*

Governance

In the early 1700s in French Louisiana, the Natchez were one of the last surviving Mississippian moundbuilder cultures. Fascinated by the Natchez, French accounts documented the culture, particularly the government and how it managed its great kingdom. It is from this documentation that we have a firsthand account of what the leadership and government was like for Mississippian moundbuilders.



Copper Repousse Plate Depicting Birdman (Rogan Plate),
Smithsonian Institute, Photographed by D.E. Hurlbert

The Natchez capitol was known as the Grand Village. That is where the great king, or Micco (pronounced Meek-o), “the Great Sun,” lived. The Micco was usually male, but there are accounts of female Miccos.

A Micco was born into the role of leader based on his mother’s lineage. The Micco was both a religious and political leader who had total power and authority over his kingdom. One of the Micco’s primary goals was to maintain harmony among his people. To do this he would lead ceremonies, host dances, and perform other symbolic gestures to reinforce his leadership and responsibility to his people. His brother would have served as the war leader, even though there is little documentation of wars or hostile conflicts during the Mississippian era. There were other leaders, of course, with less authority.

The Natchez way of life ended in 1731, marking the last of the moundbuilder cultures as they were known. However, their descendants continue to practice many similar cultural traditions. Although the actual form of government has changed for the descendants of the Mississippian cultures, many of the ideals and titles remain the same. The Kialegee Tribal Town, located in Wetumka, is a tribal town affiliated with the Muscogee (Creek) Nation. The Kialegee Tribal Town leader is referred to as the Mekko. Today, Mekko leaders are elected by tribal members in a process similar to America’s election process.

Here, the Kialegee Mekko, Tiger Hobia (pronounced Ho-Bye), talks about what it means to be a contemporary Mekko.



Kialegee Mekko Tiger Hobia, *Photograph by Leslie Gee*

AICCM: What motivated you to want to become a tribal leader?

MH: To better the tribe. My plan is going to take time but once it gets going, we will be on track again. It's not every day you can say, "I have three hundred plus people to look after and they are depending on me and my business committee to get things going in the right direction for the tribe."

AICCM: As the Mekko, what are your responsibilities?

MH: Mostly I am here to oversee everything and try to make the town the best it can be; to get reports from everybody and see if we are helping people in the tribal town. That is mostly what I look at: how to help people. My main concern is trying to help the elderly and families. Also education, housing and programs like that.

AICCM: Kialegee was part of the moundbuilder culture going way back. Is that legacy carried on in any way?

MH: As far as moundbuilders go, we have an elders group who is very knowledgeable. We are just now getting to a point where we have to let the young generation know about our history, that we are the mound people. There are some films and books written about our history. We are trying to teach the young generation what Kialegee means and that it does mean the moundbuilders and we are going to try and let them know they are part of a generation that has a long history.

AICCM: Is there anything else you would like to say, in general, to the young generation about Kialegee government or culture?

MH: It's good to be a part of any kind of culture. Most of it comes down to heritage. You have to learn where you belong and you have

to learn where you began. That's what I tell my grandsons, that they are part of Kialegee and they always will be. They are Kialegee – that's something to be proud of. Any kind of heritage is something that you are always proud of.

Activities:

Go to the National Congress of American Indians website at www.ncai.org to learn more about Native American governments today and to find answers to the questions below.

- 1) Research the relationship the U.S. Government has today with American Indian tribal governments. What type of relationship do they have? What does it mean for a tribe to be a sovereign nation?
- 2) How many moundbuilder affiliated tribes are presently located in Oklahoma? Identify where the affiliated moundbuilder tribes located in Oklahoma are found on a map of the state (tribes are listed in Origins section).
- 3) Dig Deeper: Locate the homelands of the moundbuilder affiliated tribes.

Look for additional activities in Native American Heritage: Moundbuilders Lesson 4 in *The Oklahoman!*

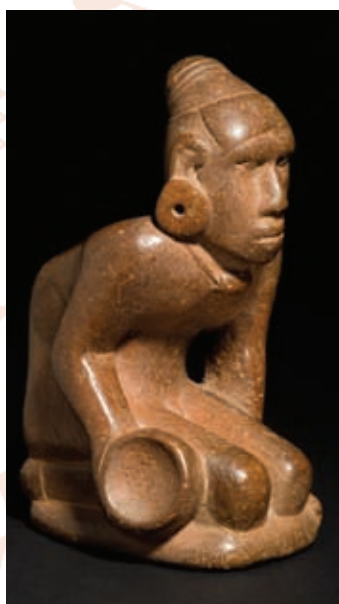
Muscogee Creek Nation Government Mound Building, Okmulgee, Oklahoma



The Game of Chunkey



Central Cahokia, *Cahokia Mounds Historic Site*, Painting by Lloyd K. Townsend



Chunkey Player Effigy Pipe, *St. Louis Science Center*, Photograph by John Bigelow Taylor

villages and cities. Often, chunkey games were played in large arenas in front of huge cheering crowds that sat on mound stairs and walls, similar to modern stadiums. Many of the spectators traveled from great distances to watch the games. The court or playing field was very neatly arranged with sand strewn over it to increase the rolling speed of the stone. Sometimes the playing courts were 200 feet long – more than half the length of a football field! Chunkey was not only an exciting pastime,

If there was ever a national moundbuilder pastime it was the game of chunkey. Starting around the year 700 C.E., chunkey (chun-K-ee) developed into the favorite team sport of the Mississippians. Chunkey was a highly competitive game played outside in which one player would roll a disc-shaped stone called a chunkey stone down a sand-filled court while other players threw spears or shot arrows to project where they thought the stone would land. Whichever player's arrow or spear landed closest to where the stone came to rest was the winner.

The game of chunkey was an important daily event throughout

but was often played by teams who represented towns in which the stakes of the game determined which leaders conquered other kingdoms. In addition, privilege and esteem provided a higher social status to the winning players.



Chunkey Stone, *Smithsonian Institute*, Photograph by D.E. Hurlbert

Chunkey stones were about 3 to 15 inches in diameter and made out of regional stones such as quartzite and basalt. Over time, thousands of chunkey stones have been found throughout the moundbuilder regions of the U.S., verifying the popularity of the game. Often found near chunkey stones are artifacts with elaborately illustrative iconography depicting chunkey players.



Chunkey Stone, *American Museum of Natural History*, Photograph by John Bigelow Taylor

Chunkey stones were not owned by individuals, but rather by villages, cities or clans. Just like a favorite baseball bat or lucky glove, chunkey stones were prized and used over many years and passed down from generation to generation.

Activity:

- Play a modified form of the game of chunkey with guidance from your teacher.



Chief Gregory E. Pyle



Assistant Chief Gary Batton



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Language



Gadugi: The Mission of the Cherokee Nation

Gadugi means working together as individuals, families and communities for a quality of life for this and future generations by promoting confidence, tribal culture and an effective, sovereign government.

- Largest tribe in Oklahoma
- Over \$4 million contributed to education from public schools to college scholarships
- One of the largest employers in Northeast Oklahoma
- Building strong communities by providing clean, running water, upgrading highways and improving bridges

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