



"Talking Bayou"

United Houma Nation Newsletter

Volume 1 Number 1

November 2009

Message from the Principal Chief

Brenda Dardar Robichaux

Halito/Bonjour! It is with great enthusiasm to publish the first United Houma Nation (UHN) newsletter in over five years. Due to the lack of funding and incorrect tribal citizens' addresses, it has been difficult to continue with the circulation of this newsletter. However, you can now look forward to receiving "Talking Bayou" on a quarterly basis.

Over the last five years we have experienced daunting challenges, with that comes unique opportunities. With the trials and tribulations the hurricanes have caused us, no one can deny we are living in challenging times. The UHN estimates following Katrina and Rita, approximately 7,000 tribal citizens were directly affected by these hurricanes, with nearly half displaced. It is hard to imagine only three years after Katrina and Rita, hurricanes Gustav and Ike would greatly impact our tribal communities yet again. The UHN received funds from various grants and contributions. These donations have had a powerful effect on the UHN and its tribal citizens in our relief efforts. Thousands of tribal citizens have received aid from the UHN Hurricane Relief Office. We have begun to devise an emergency response plan and have received funding to write a UHN multi-jurisdictional hazardous mitigation plan; the first of its kind.

The UHN has made our presence known to the world by receiving the honor of opening the V-day celebration with a blessing and traditional dance. We were visited by Dennis Banks' Sacred Run and the Longest Walk, whose mission is to bring attention to indigenous issues as well as current environmental issues Indian country faces today. The UHN has been featured in numerous award winning films and documentaries. We have provided UHN representation by serving on panels across the United States as well as abroad. We have been honored with visits from Martin Luther King III, Danny Glover, and French dignitaries to name a few. Tribal citizens have upheld our long tradition of military service. Citizens of the UHN are serving as elected public officials and US Congressional staff, healthcare providers, attorneys and educators. We continue to see a record number of tribal citizens pursuing higher education. The UHN is blessed to have these individuals returning home to give back to our tribal communities by offering their gifts and talents. We are the United Houma Nation and continue to persevere.

In reflecting back on the last five years since our last newsletter as well as the 20 years I have spent in tribal government, I am grateful to see how far we have come as a tribe. In the face of adversity, our people have proven time and time again that nothing will keep us from moving forward. From hurricane recovery, community development, traditional cultural preservation as well as other services, the United Houma Nation has made a strong imprint on Louisiana history as well as the greater Indian Country community. I am proud to serve as Principal Chief of such

resilient and determined tribal citizens and look forward to seeing what the future brings us.

Yokoke / Bien Merci

THE UNITED HOUMA NATION: The Three Part Plan

The Tribal Council of the United Houma Nation (UHN) has authorized a strategic planning initiative to develop a three-part plan in order to assist tribal citizens and their families with hurricane and storm evacuation, mitigation and stabilization. This initiative is facilitated by Meffert & Etheridge Environmental Projects, LLC and Jonathan Tate, to develop a three-part plan to assist tribal citizens and their families with hurricane and storm *evacuation, mitigation* and *stabilization*. Six community meetings were held to present information to tribal citizens about the plan and to get feedback on those issues related to its three parts. The first part of the plan, *evacuation*, is meant to take people out of harm's way. The second part, *mitigation*, is to guide tribal citizens in changing the way they live down the bayou. The third and final part of the plan, *stabilization*, is designed to help tribal citizens reclaim higher ground. Taken in concert, the three parts of the plan will assist tribal citizens prepare to take themselves out of harm's way of hurricanes and tropical storms by establishing evacuation procedures and locations through negotiating formal agreements with tribal communities in the region to ensure our people will have a welcoming place. In addition, the plan will provide tribal citizens with the technical expertise to mitigate the effects

of storms through home elevation, energy generation, selection of appropriate building materials and property preparation for high water and storm surges. For those tribal citizens who make the personal decision to move from lower lying areas of the coast, the plan will identify opportunities for the creation of new UHN communities on higher ground. The new communities are close enough to existing traditional coastal UHN communities so the relationships between those who move and those who stay can be maintained.

No plan will be successful and/or complete until all tribal citizens have the opportunity to participate. The first round of meetings was well attended. Everyone who was present was able to participate and put forth their comments, thoughts and ideas. All of which will be accounted for in the final plan. The plan is expected to be finished by 2011.

“Celebrating Abilities” Powwow

On Saturday, September 19, 2009, the United Houma Nation Vocational Rehabilitation Services hosted the first disability awareness powwow. The “Celebrating Abilities” powwow, held on the grounds of the KC Home located in Dulac, Louisiana, had an estimated 400 people in attendance. In addition to the traditional powwow celebration of dancing, singing and displaying of native arts; disability resources were present to share information about what services are available for individuals with disabilities. The powwow honored individuals with disabilities for the talents and abilities they contribute to our community. The powwow is the

perfect place to embrace the inclusion of individuals with disabilities in all aspects of the community. Based on the turnout and feedback from both the tribal and disability communities, the program staff is looking forward to making this an annual event. The head staff for the event was carefully chosen with the majority of the staff either being individuals with disabilities or having a personal connection with the disability community. A very special thanks goes to the head staff for being a part of the celebration, including Head Man: Lucas Gilbert (Houma Nation-Cut Off, LA), Head Lady: Delorna Strong (Apache Tribe-Lawton, OK), Head Little Boy: Terry "TJ" Voisin, Jr. (Houma Nation-Houma, LA), Head Little Girl: Kyla Billiot (Houma Nation-Galliano, LA), Host Drum: Medicine Tail, Head Gourd Dancer: Michael V. Billie (Dine/Navajo-Active US Navy), Master of Ceremonies: Walter Celestine (Alabama Coushatta-Livingston, TX), and Arena Director: Thomas Dardar (Houma Nation-Houma, LA).

The United Houma Nation Vocational Rehabilitation Services is a federally funded program by the Department of Education charged with providing comprehensive employment services to UHN tribal citizens with disabilities. The mission of the program is to assist eligible tribal citizens with obtaining or maintaining gainful employment for greater self-sufficiency and independence. To be eligible for United Houma Nation Vocational Rehabilitation Services applicants must be registered citizens of the UHN. The individual must reside within the UHN service area and have a physical or mental disabling condition that presents a barrier to employment. Anyone

interested in learning more about Vocational Rehabilitation Services should contact the UHNVR staff at (985)223-3093.

Grants & Services

The purpose of the United Houma Nation Relief Office is to assist tribal citizens impacted by natural disasters and to assist in the coordination of the UHN disaster preparedness plans. Grants and Services/Community Development initiatives are administered through this office. Please contact the appropriate staff members: Charlene Soares, Administrative Assistant, Samantha Shaffstall, Case Manager, Alyssa Franklin, Student Office Clerk, 4400 Hwy. 1, Raceland, LA 70394 Office: (985) 537-8867 Fax: (985) 537-8812 or email relief@unitedhoumanation.org.

KUHN Radio Station

The UHN has been awarded a construction permit and an administrative grant to build a new public radio station headquartered in Golden Meadow with the call letters KUHN and a frequency on the radio dial of 89.3 FM. The community radio station will provide local programming including music, community calendars, news, sports, weather, informational programs of the UHN, and interactive talk shows. The first year of the three year grant will see the radio station streaming on the internet, followed sometime in the following years with broadcasting its signal through the lower Lafourche and Terrebonne parishes. The

low signal, community radio station has been a long time coming. The UHN is looking for volunteers to serve on the KUHN Advisory Board and/or assist in radio operations. If you are interested please email the station at KUHN@unitedhoumanation.org.

Guerriers de L' Écrevisse Spring Gathering, 2009

The United Houma Nation Men's group, Guerriers de L' Écrevisse (Crawfish Warriors) held their first Gathering on Saturday March 28th, 2009. It was a day of activities and fellowship, the beginning of an active effort to encourage Houma men to take a more active role in the affairs of our Nation. Activities for the day included traditional sports, culture and history talks. Plans for future meetings were discussed. Houma men (18 yrs old and older) interested in being a part of Guerriers de L' Écrevisse please contact Michael Dardar at (504) 912-0165 or Thomas Dardar at (985) 665-4085.

UHN Youth Activities

Bayou Eagles The Bayou Eagles dance group specializes in traditional dance and cultural performances. Activities include inter-tribal dancing, regalia making, lessons on the history and culture of the United Houma Nation and volunteering at UHN events. The Bayou Eagles are under the direction of Jamie Billiot jjbilliot@gmail.com, Cacinda Voisin voisc474@its.nicholls.edu, and Brandy Solet soletb@bellsouth.net.

The Youth Media Team The Youth Media Team (YMT) is a group of young men and women who are taking active roles in our tribal communities striving to preserve our cultural traditions through oral history. Our tribal youth is able to make a connection with tribal leaders and elders by conducting interviews.

The Kids' Camera Project After hurricanes Gustav and Ike, youth traveled to tribal communities to collect stories through their photos. YMT captured pictures from the Elder's Fest and proudly displayed them at the UHN Banquet.

Youth Leadership Training The UHN held youth leadership trainings at the Tunica Biloxi Pow Wow in Marksville as well as the Coushatta Pow Wow in Kinder. The mission to foster spiritual, physical and social development of Houma youth was accomplished through conducting interviews with vendors, dancers, singers, staff and tribal council representatives.

Indigenous Peoples' Global Summit on Climate Change

Over 400 delegates representing Indigenous People from around the world met in Anchorage, Alaska to draft a declaration expressing the views of native people on the issue of climate change. The summit took place April 20th thru April 24th, 2009. Vice-Principal Chief Michael Dardar represented the United Houma Nation and was a party to the sessions and caucuses that produced

the “Anchorage Declaration.” This document will be presented when the United Nations meets in Copenhagen to draft its official response to the climate change issue. As we deal with the effects of coastal erosion and sea-level rise here in our community it is important to realize that we are part of a global indigenous struggle.

Language and Cultural Revitalization

The United Houma Nation Cultural Revitalization Committee has been actively working on several fronts. The Committee has developed a “Houma History” power point presentation which can be used as a resource for teaching tribal history. The Committee is working on a set of reference binders that will contain books, articles and dissertations on Houma history and culture. When the project is complete a set of these will be available at the various tribal offices for Houma citizens looking for resource material on our tribe. The Committee is working with Professor Nicolas Faraclas, of the University of Puerto Rico, on the “La Langue Houmas” project. “La Langue Houmas” is the Houma-French tribal language still spoken by a significant percentage of our people. The project is documenting the unique nature of our language (the differences between Houma-French and Cajun, Creole and Standard French) and the fact the foundation is built on the aboriginal Houma language. Anyone interested in participating in these endeavors, please contact the Relief Office at (985) 537-8867.

Martin Luther King III and Realizing the Dream

When hurricanes Gustav and Ike struck our community in 2008, we quickly learned many of the resources available to us after Katrina/Rita were not to be found. As the tribe struggled to bring our hurricane recovery effort back up to speed, one of the first offers of assistance came from our friend, Martin Luther King III. Martin and his Realizing the Dream Initiative partnered with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints to organize over 1,400 volunteers. Within a short time, an army of yellow-shirted workers were on the affected bayous cleaning, repairing and encouraging us through the immediate post-disaster crisis. As the recovery effort gained momentum, Martin’s team began to deliver truckloads of food, clothing and supplies to the UHN Relief Center in Raceland. With the “Old Store” well stocked, we were able to service tribal citizens there as well as conduct outreach to Houma settlements impacted by the storms.

UHN Tribal Council District Reports

Albert Solet • District 1 St. Mary
P.O. Box 655 • Berwick, Louisiana 70342
985.498.0307 •

albert@unitedhoumanation.org

I am the newly appointed council representative for District 1 of St. Mary Parish. I am not yet retired, but I am available nights and weekends. Even though this is a volunteer position, I want to do my best for the people of St. Mary Parish. In order for me to do my job better, I need to hear from you. I need to know your needs, concerns, or

any ideas you might have for the tribe or our area. Please contact me on my cell phone or via e-mail. A community meeting was held on October 20th. I could not make the meeting because I was working out of state. Johnny Soule who sat in for me, informed me the meeting was not well attended. People might not be getting the local paper for information. We take a chance of losing benefits and programs for our citizens if we cannot prove our numbers with the census coming soon.

**Lawrence O. "Pete" Billiot • District 7
St Bernard • Plaquemine • Orleans • Jefferson
1917 Billiot Drive • St. Bernard, Louisiana
70085
504.682.5770**

The biggest challenge facing District 7 is communication. Before Hurricane Katrina, I was heavily involved in tribal events with Joe and Hazel Dardar. Katrina destroyed our homes and our records. Putting these records back together has been tough. Our young people are not getting involved like they used to. Many are not registered to vote. I am trying to get them involved, especially the ones who came of age after Katrina. We are also trying to get a meeting place in District 7. I am working with the St. Bernard Parish President's office to use the parish's new building which will be complete in January. Once we have a meeting place I am looking forward to getting our Pow Wow again.

**April Guidry • District 8 Jefferson
5074 McMurty Street • Marrero, Louisiana
70072
504.451.4507 • april@unitedhoumanation.org**

Lack of communication is a major problem facing my district. Due to the past hurricanes many citizens have been displaced making it truly hard to keep people informed. District's 8 parent committee, hosted a Halloween campout

in Bayou Segnette, which included nine families throughout the Houma Nation. The children enjoyed a nature trail walk, a variety of native games, roasting weenies, marshmallows and making s'mores. It was a success and will continue next year. Meetings for District 8 will be held on the second Tuesday of every month at 6:30 PM at the Voc Rehab office in Marrero, located at 931 Westwood Dr. Suite G. December's meeting is scheduled for the 8th and is a Christmas Potluck Celebration. The Houma Connection Inter - Tribal Parent Committee will meet every second Wednesday of the month at 11:00 AM at the Voc Rehab office in Marrero. For more information on upcoming events please contact me at the number or email listed above or Frances Johnson at (504)341-4008 at the Voc Rehab office.

**Steve Williams • District 9 Jefferson
558 Tucker Avenue • Jefferson, Louisiana
70121
504.957.9690 • steve@unitedhoumanation.org**

I hope the blood of the Houma people boils and gives them the desire to join the fight in helping our people! As the new appointed council member of Dist. 9, I have been unable to contact many people due to life and time that take a toll on maintaining a living. I want them to reach and do their part as a member of their extended family of the United Houma Nation! Rise Houma Children, Rise!

**Laura Billiot • District 10 Lafourche
107 West 221st Street • Golden Meadow,
Louisiana 70357
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After each Tribal Council meeting, I try to hold a community meeting in order to inform tribal citizens who could not attend about the issues facing the UHN. I am a long time member of the Tribal Council and appreciate the continued

trust of the citizens in my district to serve them. I work in elderly affairs and have served on nearly all of the Council committees over the years. I can be reached at the number listed above if any citizens of my district need information or assistance. The greatest challenge facing District 10 is communication. Getting information out to all tribal citizens has been difficult in recent years, especially since Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, Ike and Gustav. Because many tribal citizens suffered damage to their homes which forced them to relocate and change addresses, maintaining an accurate and up-to-date contact list of all tribal citizens has been a major challenge. If the Tribal Council cannot contact citizens, we cannot assist them in their continued recovery. It is vitally important that citizens go to the website and fill out a new contact form and send it to us as soon as possible.

**Michael Dardar • Vice Principal Chief
District 11 Lafourche
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504.912.0165 •
mayheart@unitedhoumanation.org**

My thanks to the citizens of District 11 for allowing me to represent you on the UHN Tribal Council. It is my privilege to serve the Houma citizens of the upper Lafourche district. If I can be of assistance, feel free to contact me at the phone number listed above or via email at mayheart@unitedhoumanation.org. The most pressing issue facing my district, and indeed the entire Houma Nation, is two-fold. There is the physical challenge of coastal erosion and hurricanes that threaten the viability of our communities. These in turn add to the forces of assimilation and other social ills that we have always struggled against to maintain our culture, language and society. We must all continue to be

committed to the survival of a vibrant and strong United Houma Nation.

**Lora Ann Chaisson • District 2 Terrebonne
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**Thomas Dardar, Jr. • Parliamentarian
District 6 Terrebonne
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70364
985.665.4085 •
thomas@unitedhoumanation.org**

United Houma Nation Community Development Conference

Citizens of the UHN representing eight parishes convened in Marksville, Louisiana, for a Community Development Conference, the first of its kind in UHN history; with a follow-up conference being held in Houma, Louisiana. The conferences were an opportunity for citizens of different tribal communities to share their experiences and get to know each other better, in order to strengthen and unify the UHN. The goals of the conferences were to develop greater understanding among tribal communities, come to

common understanding of critical issues which face the Houma Nation, identify strengths and weaknesses in addressing these issues, and develop outcomes and goals for engaging broader tribal communities in addressing these issues. Feedback about the conferences by participants was incredibly positive. Participants came away feeling energized and excited about UHN community development efforts and the ideas and experiences that were shared among tribal citizens and across tribal communities. The United Houma Nation organized the conferences with support from the Louisiana Disaster Recovery Foundation and NeighborWorks America. Movement Matters helped design and facilitate the gathering.

United Houma Nation Website

The best way to keep up with the programs, efforts and issues of the United Houma Nation is to visit the website at www.unitedhoumanation.org. The website is updated regularly. The site includes links to tribal history, government, services, multimedia, activities, powwows, disaster preparedness, “hot topics”, community meeting schedules, upcoming events, and the Palmetto Hut Store, just to highlight a few. It contains all the information one needs for contacting the Principal Chief, Tribal Council, tribal offices, staff, programs and assistance centers.

Federal Recognition Overview

In 1979, the UHN filed our letter of intent to petition for federal

acknowledgment through the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) federal acknowledgement process. This process requires petitioning tribes to prove they meet seven mandatory criteria including being identified by outside sources as an Indian community from 1900 to present, as well as demonstrating our leaders had political influence over tribal citizens from “historic times” to present. After several years of preparation, the UHN submitted its petition for Federal Acknowledgment in 1985. It took six years before the petition went on active consideration in 1991, and another three years before the Branch of Acknowledgement and Research (now the Office of Federal Acknowledgement) issued a negative “Proposed Findings” in 1994. The tribe responded with a rebuttal in 1996, there has been no further action taken to date. For eleven years the UHN has endured a constant stream of proposed and then cancelled timetables from the BIA. Attempts were made at Congressional recognition in 1990 and again in 1996, but lack of real support at the federal level consigned both bills to failure before the process even started. For most of the recognition process, Native American Rights Fund (NARF) represented the UHN, however lack of funding ended the relationship in 2002. The tribe has been forced to continue on in the process without legal representation. For a more detailed description and chronology of our efforts at federal recognition, please check out our website at www.unitedhoumanation.org.

Annual Banquet

This year's annual banquet will be held on December 20, 2009 from 6:00 PM to 10:00 PM at the Houma Municipal Auditorium. Musical entertainment will be by *Kelly Parfait & Friends*. The annual banquet serves as the UHN awards night and celebratory feast. Each year the UHN awards five honors: the Pioneer Award, the Education Award, the Leadership Award, the Advocate Award and the Cultural Preservation Award. For more information, please contact the UHN Relief Office at relief@unitedhoumanation.org.

2010 Census

The 2010 Federal Census is here. Census Day is April 1, 2010. It is vital all census questionnaires be filled out and sent back promptly. It is even more important tribal citizens fill in the ethnic box on the form by writing in "United Houma Nation". Otherwise, we will once again be undercounted. Undercounting our numbers affect negatively on our ability to be awarded grants and to qualify for programs and benefits.

Inter – Tribal Council

The Inter – Tribal Council (ITC) was created in 1974 as a consortium of five Indian tribes: the Coushatta, the Chitimacha, the Tunica-Biloxi, the Jena Band of the Choctaw and the United Houma Nation. ITC was developed to take advantage of federal employment

and training opportunities available through the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA), then Jobs Training Partnership Act (JTPA) and now Workforce Investment Act (WIA). In 1984, ITC created the Institute for Indian Development (IID), an IRS 501 (c) 3 corporation. The IID added the Choctaw Apache and the Clifton Choctaws to the original five tribe membership. The IID created the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP), which oversees the Older Worker Program, which is designed to assist citizens of the seven tribes who are age 55 and older with employment opportunities.

UHN Constitutional Amendment Election

The United Houma Nation Election Board has given notice an election will be held to consider amending the Constitution of the United Houma Nation relative to Article VI, Section 1(e) which states "The Principal Chief shall be limited to two consecutive terms in office." The election is being called to consider repealing this provision in the constitution. The election will be held on Saturday, December 5, 2009 from 6:00 AM to 8:00 PM. Designated polling locations as well as election deadlines have been established and can be found by going to the UHN website and navigating to the "Hot Topics" section. Also listed on the site are rules governing absentee voting, election day balloting and a sample ballot.

Newsletter Stories

Do you have a news item or story for our newsletter? Send it to us at newsletter@unitedhoumanation.org. The newsletter will be published quarterly.

BFT: Buy From The Tribe

The Seafood Committee, born out the first UHN Community Development Conference came with the idea of a slogan to help tribal citizens who are commercial fishermen, not only sell their seafood but get the best price they can. “BFT: Buy From The Tribe” was born. The slogan will be used to identify UHN fishermen and their product. Look for more on this “BFT Brand” in future newsletters and UHN efforts to help tribal fishermen.

Tribal Offices

United Houma Nation Tribal Center

20986 La. Highway 1
Golden Meadow, LA. 70357
Phone: 985.475.6640
Fax: 985.475.7109

Vocational Rehabilitation Office

991 Grand Caillou Road Bldg. 2
Houma, LA. 70360
Phone: 985.223.3093
Fax: 985.223.3095

Vocational Rehabilitation Outreach

301 Third Street
Morgan City, LA. 70380
Phone: 985.380.2773

Vocational Rehabilitation Outreach

931 Westwood Drive Suite G
Marrero, LA. 70072
Phone: 504.341.4008

United Houma Nation Relief Office

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Inter – Tribal Council

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Inter – Tribal Council

United Houma Nation Tribal Center

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