

Northwest & North Central Region Quarterly Report

April/May/June 2020

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Though COVID-19 severely interrupted the Northwest and North Central Region's programming plans for the remainder of Florida Archaeology Month and late spring/early summer, staff quickly went to work in bolstering and adapting regular FPAN programming to virtual platforms. Beginning in May, Nicole began producing a new, weekly series entitled "Zoom into Archaeology." This series is conducted over the online chat service Zoom and provides registered participants with a weekly presentation on a topic of interest in archaeology, as well as a 15-minute question and answer session with the presenter. "Zoom into Archaeology" provides programs dedicated to both adult and child audiences (the latter with adult supervision only), utilizing prepared presentations by FPAN Coordinating Center, Northwest Region, and North Central Region staff. At the conclusion of the 4th quarter, the Northwest Region hosted eight "Zoom into Archaeology" programs with a total of 315 participants. Two of these programs were conducted in collaboration with the Bay County Public Library as a part of their virtual summer reading program. "Zoom into Archaeology" presentations are also recorded and viewable on the [FPAN YouTube channel](#) to those unable to join the live meetings. While social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram have always been important to advertising events and disseminating information, staff also focused on producing additional interactive content to encourage user engagement. Destination Archaeology Resource Center Museum Manager Mike Thomlin utilized the Northwest Region Facebook page to post his popular "Hike with Mike" video tours of local natural areas, Nicole developed the "Archaeology Short Takes" video series to teach quick lessons about archaeology, and old social media series like "What is it Wednesday?!" (an artifact identification quiz) were brought back with great success.

While pandemic-related travel restrictions prevented staff from being able to fulfill planned teaching engagements in Florida and elsewhere during this quarter, virtual platforms like Zoom became an excellent alternative tool. Nicole and FPAN Associate Director Dr. Della Scott-Ireton were asked by Dr. Timothy Gambin in 2019 to travel to the University of Malta in Valletta, Malta, to conduct a week-long, in-depth program on engaging the public with maritime heritage resources for Master's students in the university's underwater archaeology program in April. While travel proved impossible, Nicole and Della were able to provide several of their lectures to Dr. Gambin's students via Zoom. Nicole and Della were also approached by Les Burke of the Junior Scientists in the Sea non-profit organization to provide a week-long Submerged Sites Education and Archaeological Stewardship (SSEAS) course to young divers in San Croix. Although Nicole and Della were unable to teach the practical diving portion of the course, they were able to deliver the classroom portion through Zoom in June. As travel restrictions were

relaxed for research related purposes, staff from both regional centers have started to monitor archaeological sites within their travel limits for the Heritage Monitoring Scouts grant. Prior to having the ability to travel within a limited range, staff was working diligently on HMS permits so that when the time comes, they will be ready to monitor sites on state lands.

In an effort to supplement home schooling efforts at the end of the last school year, Tristan Harrenstein created graphical guides to some of our established kids activities for parents. The North Central Regional Center sought out new educational venues on social media to share our educational content. Several Facebook groups have been established to assist home schooling parents, such as “Quarantine Kids”. North Central worked to connect with these types of groups to share our educational materials. Barbara and Tristan have worked with the Community Classroom Consortium (CCC) and the local PBS station (WFSU) on several different programs, including a virtual summer challenge kickoff, which featured a video jointly produced by WFSU and FPAN. The Virtual Summer Challenge streamed on Facebook Live and has since reached close to 4,000 people. The video was also featured on the local program, “Local Routes”. The North Central Regional Center has also maintained a strong working relationship with the Tallahassee Senior Center, and continues to partner with them to offer adult educational programming virtually.

Our goals, established at our staff meeting back in February, included working to reach underserved audiences and incorporate more social justice messaging into our programs where appropriate. Both regions were already aware of the connection between archaeology and social justice and had made efforts to make those connections for our audiences, but have since stepped up our efforts. Tristan worked with translators to compose formal Spanish and Chinese translations to a few of the videos on our new YouTube channel as a test to see if there might be an audience. Staff in both the North Central and Northwest regions have been working diligently to educate themselves on issues pertaining to social justice, including attending a webinar hosted by the Society for Black Archaeologists which discussed archaeology during the BLM era. Staff has also been working to incorporate social justice messages into programming that we have already established. For example, Barbara has incorporated a message in her climate change lecture on how disadvantaged groups are more susceptible to climate change and how it will exacerbate inequality.

As we adapt to virtual programming for the time being, we have had the desire to do workshops, although they are not always fully adaptable to the virtual format. As such, the full Disasters and Museum Preparedness (DaMP) workshop is not feasible online, so we provided a specially created program highlighting some simple strategies that can mitigate the effects of hurricane damage. For this last program in particular, attendance was average but the interest was intense and demonstrates a real need with our local museums and potential for future partnerships. We are looking to expand this type of programming in the future as a way to stay engaged with our local museum community.

Collaboration between the two regions and the Coordinating Center, including the Destination Archaeology Resource Center, has been strong and has led to new programming opportunities. Staff has met weekly via Zoom to discuss programming ideas as well as get some virtual face time with their colleagues, which is important during this time. Although COVID-19 has

presented a variety of challenges, the staff's willingness to step up and think out outside the box has kept our programming strong and has allowed us to continue our mission and maintain our relationship with the public. We have received numerous comments from our followers about how much they appreciate our programming and how it has helped them break up the monotony of quarantine and provide beneficial educational entertainment to them and their children.

Finally, the Northwest Region said a sad farewell to public archaeology assistant Rachel Hines this quarter as she graduated from the University of West Florida Historical Archaeology Master's program. Rachel made significant contributions to FPAN over the last three years, running the Public Archaeology Lab in her third year and developing the [Gravestone Research and Volunteer-based Education \(G.R.A.V.E.\) lesson plans](#) as a part of her thesis work. In June, FPAN graduate assistant Elaine Foster's also successfully defended her thesis on the investigation of the historic Mare Island Naval Cemetery (California). FPAN thanks Rachel and Elaine for their hard work and wishes them all the best in their future endeavors!