

# Powwow celebrates Native American life

## Dance contest added to event

BY ALLIE ROSENBAUM  
STAFF WRITER

Fetzer Gym usually is home to pickup basketball games, but Saturday it transformed into a modern celebration of Native American heritage.

The 20th Annual Carolina Indian Circle powwow brought together students of Native American descent and those who wanted to learn more about it.

Powwows traditionally united tribes and non-Native Americans into an atmosphere where they could showcase their heritage and talents, and Saturday's event was no exception.

"We think it is really important to have an annual powwow on campus," said Brandi Brooks, president of the Carolina Indian Circle. "It is a way to let the campus and surrounding community see, feel, smell, hear, taste and touch our history."

This year the powwow also served as a dance competition, with different groups performing traditional tribal dances to the rapid beating of drums. Dressed in ornate head-dresses and leather moccasins, children and teenagers stomped and chanted as their ancestors had done for thousands of years.

Toys and candy were provided to all of the children performers and a small cash award was given to the dancers who took first place in the teen division, Brooks said.

Although the competition might have been what drew some to the event, the primary purpose of the powwow was to educate the UNC community about the presence of Native Americans on campus, said junior Ashley Oxendine, the powwow committee chairwoman.

"We are the minority of minorities on campus," said Ashley's sister, senior Sheena Oxendine, Native American program coordinator. "We represent less than 1 percent of people on campus."

Brooks said there are a handful more than 200 Native American students at UNC, including undergraduate and graduate students, as well as faculty members.



DTH/AMY HOLTER

Ree Richardson, an East Carolina University graduate, participates in the Women's Fancy Dance in Fetzer Gym during Saturday's powwow.

Because that number has grown from about 10 in the mid-1970s, UNC created an American Indian Center in September to serve as a hub for that student population.

There now is a search underway for a director to lead the new center. After a national search, group leaders have narrowed their choices to three candidates.

Brooks said she is confident that any of the candidates will be a strong addition to the campus group.

"We really just want to break down the stereotype that most people have about Native Americans," Ashley Oxendine said. "People seem to think that Native Americans only live on reservations and ride horses with their bow and arrows."

Despite small numbers, Native Americans still have a significant

presence on campus and continue to grow in their impact, Brooks said.

The walkway between the two parts of the Student Union was designed by Native American Synora Lynch.

And the Native American presence has reached classrooms, as professor Tol Foster teaches three classes on Native American literature.

"It is important that students know we are just like them," Brooks said. "We live in the same dorm as everyone else, wear the same clothes and just happen to be Native American."

Contact the University Editor at [udesk@unc.edu](mailto:udesk@unc.edu).

# PlayMakers to perform Morrison's prized play

BY PHILLIP CROOK  
STAFF WRITER

The theatrical adaptation of Toni Morrison's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel "The Bluest Eye" premiered on the PlayMakers Repertory Company stage Saturday night in a production that promises to be just as stirring and thought-provoking as the book.

PlayMakers presents "The Bluest Eye" through March 25 in the Paul Green Theatre in the Center for Dramatic Art. Tickets range from \$10 to \$30.

Adapted for the stage by Lydia R. Diamond, "The Bluest Eye" is the story of 11-year-old Pecola Breedlove's struggle to understand the disparity between her brown skin and eyes and the Caucasian, blue-eyed ideal of beauty in 1940s Ohio.

Tony Award-winning director Trezana Beverley said the play essentially is about self-esteem and the universal need to understand your own self-worth, a theme, Beverley said, that "crosses all color lines."

The title derives from Pecola's obsession with blue eyes and from her belief that, if she had her own pair, she finally would be accepted by the world around her.

"It's so hard to adapt a novel to a play," said Joseph Haj, PlayMakers producing artistic director. "But this adaptation is utterly stage-worthy — it's brilliantly theatrical."

Morrison's 1970 novel immediately made literary waves for its controversial subject matter, especially a scene in which Pecola's father rapes her.

Beverley said that the book is edgy and sometimes difficult to read, but that she liked the transformational power of its themes and the substance of the characters.

"Diamond managed to capture the essence of the book," Beverley said.

"I thought I could flesh it out and add to it onstage."

Beverley brought the script to the attention of PlayMakers when the company was planning its 2006-07 season. She received the



COURTESY OF JON GARDINER

Georgia Southern, Allison Reeves and Danika Williams play as Frieda, Claudia and Pecola in PlayMakers Repertory Company's "The Bluest Eye."

### ATTEND THE SHOW

Dates: Wednesday through March 25  
Location: Paul Green Theatre in the Center for Dramatic Art  
Info: [www.playmakersrep.org](http://www.playmakersrep.org)

of the preview audiences, which were largely composed of college-aged students.

Kristen Lattimore, a freshman sports and exercise science major, went to the Thursday night preview as part of her DRAM 120 class.

She said the most emotionally challenging part of the play for her was the sexual molestation scene.

"It was amazing but hard to watch," Lattimore said.

"To relate to that, to think about being in that situation, was difficult."

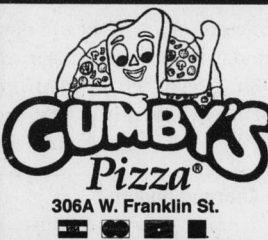
Beverley said that she understands that these elements of the story are challenging, but that she thinks they are effective to get people talking about difficult or taboo subjects.

She said one of the main reasons she wanted to bring the play to Chapel Hill was because she thought the community could relate well to the story's struggles with complex racial themes.

"While this play is on campus, I hope students take advantage of it," Beverley said.

"It's a good play for really great discussions."

Contact the Arts Editor at [artsdesk@unc.edu](mailto:artsdesk@unc.edu).



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