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Cultural Healing: A Native American Appreciation Event and Research on the Importance of Celebrating Culture in Native American Communities

Senior Project

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The Esther G. Maynor Honors College
University of North Carolina at Pembroke

By

Alexis C. Strong
School of Business
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Alexis C. Strong
Honors College Scholar

Date

Dr. Jane M. Haladay
Faculty Mentor

Date

Joshua Kalin Busman, Ph.D.
Senior Project Coordinator

Date

Acknowledgements

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The Scotland County Historic Properties Commission for allowing this project to use your grounds and for your continued efforts to preserve cultures of all kind and educate local communities.

The American Indian Studies Department at UNCP, as well as the Museum of the Southeast Indian and the American Indian Heritage Center. Without hesitation these programs helped this project whether it be sending out advertisements or sharing vendor information. This project would not have been successful without your efforts.

Abstract

This essay highlights the process of planning an event to celebrate the culture of Southeastern North Carolina Native American peoples. Throughout this essay, the reader will gain knowledge of the motivation behind the project, the importance of celebrating Native American cultures, the significance behind the title “Cultural Healing”, and the preparation that went into planning the actual event. Included at the end of the essay will be timelines, forms, contracts, and event layouts that can be used in planning similar events in the future. The main purpose of this project was to create a blueprint for future events of similar stature.

Cultural Healing: A Native American Appreciation Event and Research on the Importance of Celebrating Culture in Native American Communities

Introduction and Motivation

From the very beginning of prepping for this project, there was no doubt within my mind that I wanted to do something within my community. I also wanted to incorporate both my major, business administration with a marketing concentration, and my minor, American Indian studies. Around the time of the project idea deadline, I was working with the Arts Council of Scotland County. I had, in previous months, mentioned different ideas I had about possible events within the community the council could plan that would highlight the local Natives in the area. When the council receive extra grant monies that needed to be put towards minority artists, the chair of the board reached out to me with the opportunity of planning a Native American event, which would include performers and vendors. I presented the idea to my mentor, Dr. Jane Haladay, and with her approval, I submitted the project as my senior project proposal. The council had never put on an event such as this before, so there was no former knowledge to lean on. From scratch a committee of volunteers and myself began planning a search for artists, vendors, venues, and volunteers. The council requested that I take on this event as a trial run for what they hope to become an annual event. Therefore, the purpose of this project became to create a blueprint for future volunteers and committee members who wish to take part in planning similar events.

Importance of Celebrating Culture in/of Native Communities

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Perseverance and resilience are major themes in the importance of celebrating Native cultures. Through the traditional songs, dances, and stories that have been passed through generations, the perseverance of Native Americans is shown. When the Native ancestors were going to war, or through a drought, or through sickness and famine these same songs and dances were executed as a form of prayer to the Creator asking for help and strength. Some tribe's sacred traditions carried their ancestors through the French and Indian War, some through the Trail of Tears. No matter the hardships and trials faced, the fact that the modern tribes are able to sing, dance, and tell the stories of their ancestors is a testament to the resiliency of Native Americans. The first peoples of this land are not extinct, and they live to tell their story.

Preservation is also an important aspect of celebrating culture in Native American communities. Many tribes are finding themselves with few elders who speak their native tongue or know the stories word for word. It has become a tremendous effort of modern-day Native Americans to begin to teach this to the youngest generations within the tribe, so the culture is able to live on for generations more to come. This teaching is done by the tribes coming together as a community and telling the stories, singing the songs, and dancing.

The Significance of Cultural Healing

When trying to name the event, the committee brought the decision to the table. As we began to throw out ideas, "Cultural Healing" was suggested, and we all immediately agreed. What better time than now, as we as a community, country, and even world see the light at the

end of horrific pandemic, to highlight the advantages of Native cultures to the healing of the mind, soul, and spirit.

Personally, as a member of the Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina, I believe one of the biggest values in our tribe's culture is fellowship. For over a year, we were discouraged to fellowship. We were not supposed to hug, touch, or even be in close proximity to one another because of the spread and exposure of COVID-19. In my own personal life, and many of the other Lumbee's lives that I am in regular contact with, this had the biggest impact at church. For a lot of Lumbee tribal members, church is a routine activity. Every Sunday, Wednesday night, and sometimes even throughout the week depending on special services, Lumbees walk through their church doors faithfully. It is routine to shake hands, hug necks, and fellowship with, what is commonly known around this area as, "ya people". These are adults that have known each other since birth, and church is where they get to come together to worship their Creator along side of each other. All of that fellowship was cut out in the blink of an eye. Without notice and without a real hope or knowledge of when it would be available again. I personally go to a church that switched to drive-in services, but looking at your friends and family members through a tinted car window is nothing compared to giving them a warm embrace. Knowing this event could provide that fellowship was a major reason we wanted to have it, and we were hoping to help heal our community after such a hard year through this event.

Preparation for the Event

The committee in charge of planning this event began brainstorming our vision back in November of 2020. Open any history book in five years and it will state that the United States of America was still in the middle of a life-threatening pandemic that had already claimed millions of lives in our country alone. COVID-19 was still raging, and with the holidays and rumors of outbreaks and new strands continuously on the radio station and news channels, it was hard to plan for the upcoming week. So, planning for an event six months out was extremely difficult. The committee decided out the gate that the easiest way to begin planning was to base all our planning on an outside event. We wanted to reach out to a community partner that had similar views in preserving and celebrating culture. Immediately we thought to reach out to the Rural Heritage Center in Laurinburg, NC, which is operated by the Scotland County Historic Properties Commission. We solidified the date, May 15th, 2021 and got approval from the commission to hold the event outside on the grounds beside the Rural Heritage Center.

The next step of planning was searching for entertainment and vendors. We reached out to several performers in the beginning who could not commit without knowing the specific metrics with COVID-19 at the time of the event. We were able to gain confirmation from a drum circle, Warpaint Singers, that they would be able to provide entertainment including: a drum circle, dancing, flute, and storytelling. We were also able to book Alexis L Jones, a well-known singer from the Robeson County area. As a committee, we came to an agreement that these two performers would be ample for our three-hour event. We wanted to ensure that the performers would have ample time to share their culture, and we did not want to crowd up the time with so many performers that the event felt rushed. It was very important to ensure that

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the attendees would have time to sit and enjoy the performers as they shared their cultures through stories, song, and dance. Finding vendors was a more difficult journey. We were able to reach out to over thirty vendors whose names we obtained from different entities who had sponsored similar events before, such as the Museum of the Southeast American Indian. However, we were only able to book about five for our event date. For the first event of its kind, we were excited to have any at all, seeing as there is no reputation or notability yet.

After drafting up contracts and vendor forms to handle the legalities of the event, the next step was designing advertising materials and planning for the event at the venue. For the advertising materials, I personally designed the flyers and itineraries for the event. We collectively decided as a group to advertise on social media alone, using Facebook and Instagram as our main sources to get the word out. From our posts, we were contacted by the local radio station, WLNC 95.7 FM, and the local newspaper, The Laurinburg Exchange. These were perfect avenues to get the word out to the local residents who did not have social media. The last step of the process was mapping out the event at the venue. We were able to do this on paper at a committee meeting. The night before the event, the committee met at the event site and roped everything off according to our paper layout, making set up for the event a breeze.

Reflection

If I had known the immense stress of taking on the task of planning this event nine months ago, I probably would have not chosen this as my senior project. I more than likely would have picked a simple research topic that I was interested in and called it a day. However,

I do not regret this journey one bit. Engaging with my community, and my fellow Natives, to create an event to come together and fellowship with each other was completely worth all the stress. The stress of wanting to plan a successful event was overwhelming at times but watching as the pieces slowly fell together reassured that this was a good thing. I enjoyed the process of reaching out to the community and getting others involved. It was so rewarding, as well, to help create this event in a community that has not put Native culture in the forefront. I have lived in Scotland County all my twenty-one years, and from my recollection there has never been such an event in this county. Even though there are so many Natives in this community from so many different tribes, the only time I ever heard about my Native heritage outside of my home was when I was pulled from class to get tutoring from the Indian Education program in elementary school. I never needed this help though, not to brag on myself, but I've always been academically gifted, so eventually the only thing that acknowledged my heritage stopped, and by the time I was in middle school I never really heard anything about my culture. The representatives of the Indian Education Program at my high school did reach out to me my senior year, and they gave me access to resources and scholarships specifically for Native students, but there was never any interaction in between. Never anything that truly celebrated my identity in that way. I always felt a little out of place in school, because the people around didn't have the same cultural views as I did, and I always wished we had stronger programs in my county for the Native Americans. Planning this event has been super rewarding in knowing that I helped bring recognition and awareness to my fellow Natives in our own community, and hopefully it will have a ripple effect all throughout our county.

Works Cited

Celebrate Native American Heritage Month.” U.S. Department of the Interior, 25 Oct. 2019, www.doi.gov/blog/celebrate-native-american-heritage-month.

Mineo, Liz. “The Impact of COVID-19 on Native American Communities.” Harvard Gazette, Harvard Gazette, 11 May 2020, news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2020/05/the-impact-of-covid-19-on-native-american-communities/.

Event Timeline

Nov 2020: Begin Searching for Entertainment and Vendors

Begin Searching for Venue

Jan 2021: Venue Booked

Mar 15th: Entertainment Booked

April 15th: Vendors Booked

May 1st: Vendor Fees Collected

Day of Schedule

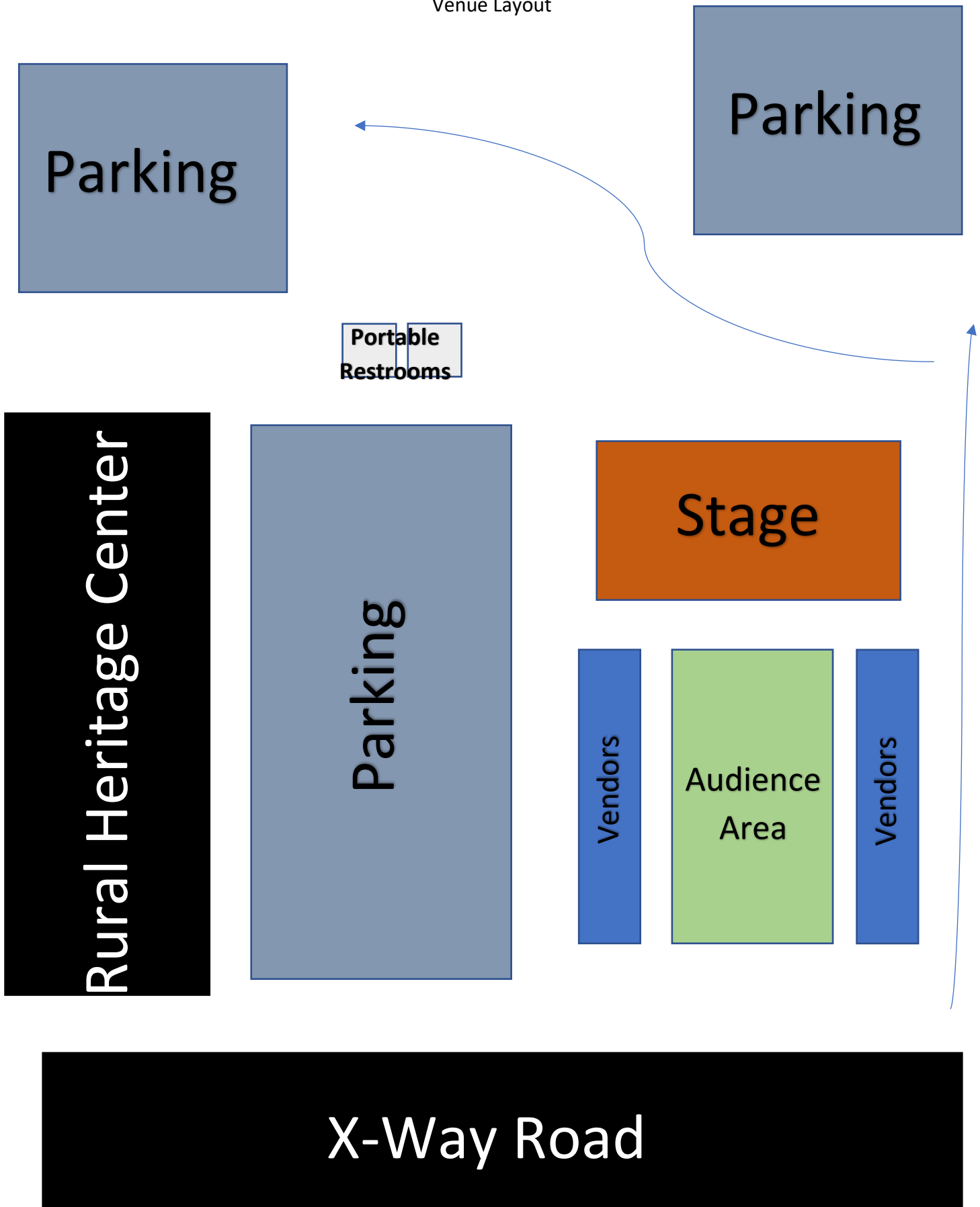
Venue Layout

May 10th: Advertising Materials Designed and Posted

May 14th: Prep Day at Venue

May 15th: EVENT DAY

Venue Layout



Vendor Application Form

**Cultural Healing: Native American Appreciation Event
Vendor Application
Saturday, May 15th, 2021 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
Rural Heritage Center Lot
13043 X Way Rd, Laurinburg, NC 28352**

Food Booths:

- Vendors are responsible for securing health permits and meeting health regulations.
- Vendors are responsible for securing appropriate fire extinguishers as required by Fire Inspector.

All Booth Spaces:

- 10x10 foot spaces are available. Vendors are responsible for setting up their own space.
- No electricity provided.
- Generators are allowed.

Things to Note:

- Set up will begin at 9:00 am. The event will be open to the public from 10:00 am until 1:00 pm. Everything and everyone must be off the property by 2:00 pm.
- Set up for your area will be provided completely by you, tables included. You will be assigned a blank plot for your set-up. Your booth must **NOT** be left unattended at any point during the event, as you are responsible for all belongings at your booth.
- The vendor fee is \$25. This is a non-refundable fee. All fees **WILL** be paid digitally. Instructions on how to pay this fee will be at the bottom of this page. Fees **MUST** be received **05/10/2021** to secure your spot as a vendor.

In the case of rain:

If there is forecasted rain the Arts Center will notify all vendors via **Facebook** that the event will be cancelled. The announcement will be made **05/14/2021** if that is the case. There is no rain date for this event. IF this does occur, the vendor fee will be refunded.

COVID-19 Guidelines:

- This event will be held outside and follow the CDC guidelines regarding COVID-19. The Arts Center will have a booth set up handing out disposable masks and have sanitizer readily available. We ask that vendors bring signage to encourage visitors at their booths to practice social distancing, but ultimately it will be up to the vendor to enforce this.

Name of Contact Person and Business Name:

Please describe what type of vendor you are, and what you will be selling:

Email:

Telephone:

Address:

NC Sales Tax Number:

The Arts Council of Scotland County and any entity thereof will not be responsible for accident or loss during the period of the festival. This is agreed to vendors as signed here:

Artist Contract

131 South Main Street
Laurinburg, NC 23852
Mailing Address:
P.O. Box 2154
Laurinburg, NC 28353
910-277-3599

Date:



We will pay _____ for services at the Native American Festival in
the amount of _\$_____.

Signed by Artist _____
Signed by Rep from SACS _____

Thank you again for your help!
Support from the community businesses like you are what makes
Scotland County such a wonderful place to live.

Event Advertisements

The Arts Council of
Scotland County
would like to invite
you to ...

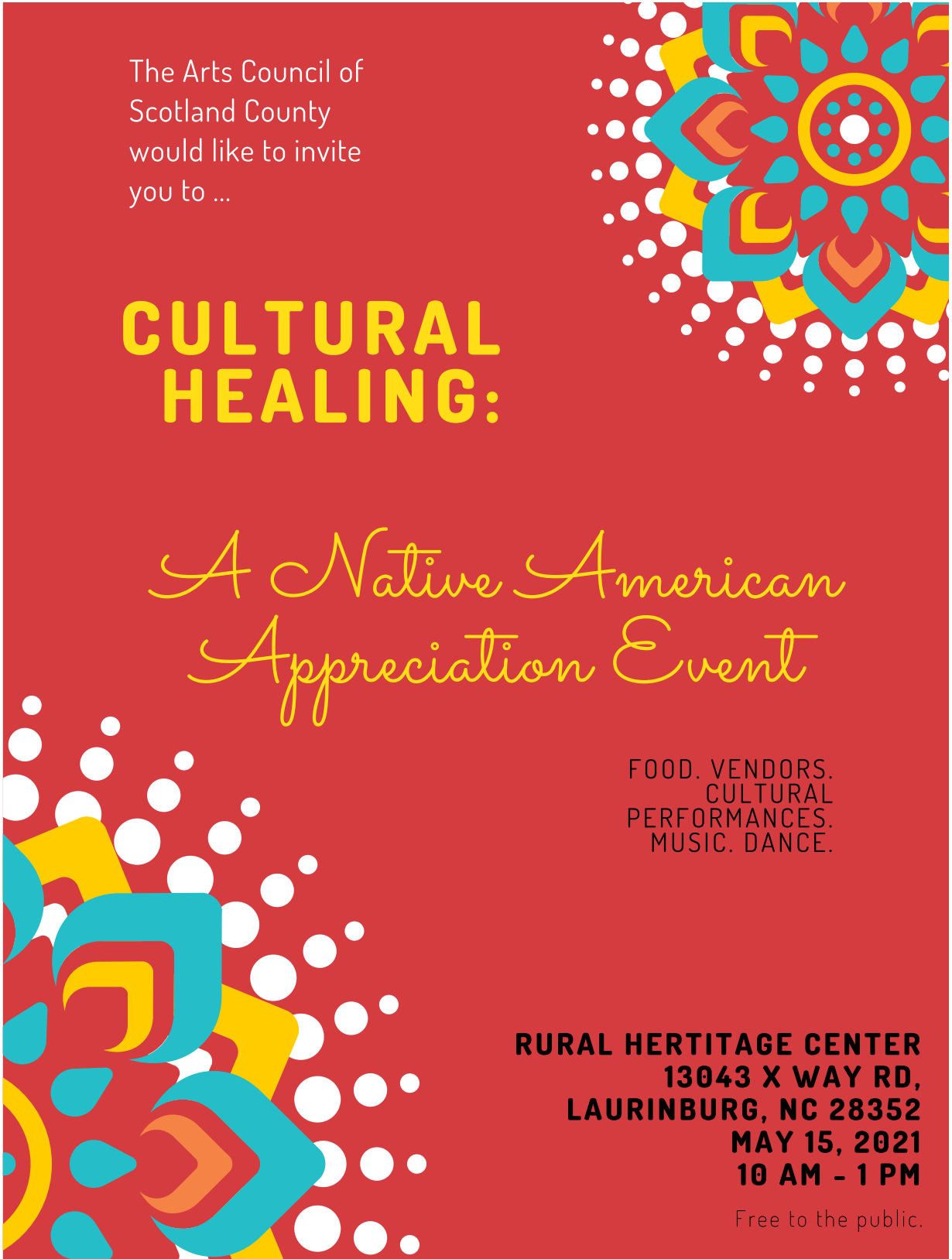
CULTURAL HEALING:

A Native American Appreciation Event

FOOD. VENDORS.
CULTURAL
PERFORMANCES.
MUSIC. DANCE.

**RURAL HERITAGE CENTER
13043 X WAY RD,
LAURINBURG, NC 28352
MAY 15, 2021
10 AM - 1 PM**

Free to the public.



CULTURAL HEALING:

A Native American Appreciation Event

Entertainment:

10:00 -11:00 : WarPaint Singers

11:00 - 11:15: Alexis Jones

11:15 - 11:45: Intermission

11:45 - 12:00 : Alexis Jones

12:00 - 1:00 WarPaint Singers

**RURAL HERITAGE CENTER
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10 AM - 1 PM**

Free to the public. Please bring lawn chairs to sit and enjoy the performers share their culture.

