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Jody Record
UNH Media Relations

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Media Relations

January 24, 2014

Mardi Gras Indians Exhibition Opening at UNH Museum Feb. 10, 2014



Caption: Mardi Gras Indians celebrate Super Sunday in their inner city neighborhoods.

DURHAM, N.H. - The story of the Mardi Gras Indians—black Louisianans who create Native American costumes to celebrate Carnival—will be told through photography and folk art in an exhibition opening Feb. 10, 2014, at the University Museum at the University of New Hampshire.

“The Beat on the Street: Second Lines, Mardi Gras Indians, and the Photography of Gary Samson,” funded in part through a grant from the New Hampshire

Humanities Council, runs through March 28, 2014.

A screening of the documentary “Bury the Hatchet” which traces the Mardi Gras Indian tradition through the eyes of three “big chiefs, will take place Wednesday, Feb 12, from 3–5 p.m. in the Memorial Union Building on Main Street. A discussion, moderated by professor Burt Feintuch of the UNH Center for the Humanities and featuring Big Chief Alfred Doucette of the Flaming Arrows, who appears in the documentary, will follow the film.

An opening reception also takes place Feb. 12, from 5:30 – 7 p.m. in the University Museum, Dimond Library, room 101. The exhibit, film, and reception are free and open to the public.

The Mardi Gras Indians, who took that name out of respect for the local Indians who aided runaway slaves, date back to the 1880s. This working class, African American tradition is distinctively part of New Orleans’ parade culture, and more broadly related to black Carnival celebrations throughout the world.

The revelers design and create their elaborate costumes, called suits, using beads, feathers, and sequins that cost hundreds of dollars and take months to complete. The suits can weigh as much as a hundred pounds.

In addition to Mardi Gras, the Indians also celebrate on March 19, St. Joseph’s Day, and on Super Sunday, the Sunday closest to the feast day. Historically, these were the only days the Mardi Gras Indians were seen in their suits. Two elaborately designed suits made and worn by Doucette will be on display during the exhibit.

The [New Hampshire Humanities Council](#) supports local cultural and educational institutions by awarding grants for innovative educational programs.

The University Museum is open Monday through Friday, 10 a.m. – 4 p.m., and Saturday, noon to 4 p.m. It will be closed two Saturdays, March 8 and 15, 2014.

For more information on the exhibit or the University Museum, contact Dale Valena, Dale.valena@unh.edu 603-862-1081 or Bill Ross, bill.ross@unh.edu, 603-862-0346.

The [University of New Hampshire](#), founded in 1866, is a world-class public research university with the feel of a New England liberal arts college. A land, sea, and space-grant university, UNH is the state's flagship public institution, enrolling 12,300 undergraduate and 2,200 graduate students.

PHOTO: A photo can be download here <http://www.unh.edu/news/releases/2014/01/images/super-sunday-9792.jpg>.

Caption: Mardi Gras Indians celebrate Super Sunday in their inner city neighborhoods.

Media Contact: [Jody Record](#) | 603-862-1462 | UNH Media Relations | [@unhcj](#)

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