

# NATCHITOCHESES PARISH JOURNAL

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## NEWS, SPORTS & INFORMATION

## Adai Caddo Indian Nation holds 2nd Annual Field Trip visiting sites across Natchitoches and CENLA

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This month, citizens of the Adai Caddo Indian Nation gathered in Natchitoches for their second annual field trip. Tribal citizens came from Louisiana, Texas, and Alabama for a weeklong tour of historic, cultural, and religious sites across Natchitoches, Sabine, Avoyelles, and Vernon Parish.

“Natchitoches is the oldest permanent settlement in Louisiana,” said Robert Brevelle, tribal councilman and trip organizer. “Our ancestors are among its founding colonial families. And for thousands of years before the French and Spanish, we Adai Caddo were here. We are proud to be part of the community.”

Over the past two field trips, the Adai Caddo visited nearly 50 sites in and around Natchitoches.

The group visited 6 of their ancient village locations as well as the 18th century presidio and mission of *Los Adaes*, which was the first capital of Texas. *Los Adaes* is Spanish for “the Adai”. Located nearby are the first two Catholic missions established in Louisiana, both of which are named for tribe as are the local bayou and lake.

Just north of the Los Adaes State Historic Site, the group prayed at it’s cemetery and mother church, St. Anne Catholic Church. St. Anne is the tribe’s patron saint. Several Native American statues and plaques adorn the church, which is on the National Register of Historic Places.

South of Natchitoches on Isle Brevelle, the group visited ancient burial sites and mounds located near the National Fish Hatchery and Melrose Plantation. The mounds and nearby bayou still bear the Adai name using its 16th century Spanish spelling of *Ataho* and *Atayo*. The group attended mass at St. Augustine Catholic Church, which was the original parish church of the St. Anne mission. The group hiked up nearby *Sang Pour Sang* (blood for blood) Hill, which was the location of the famous 1732 battle where the combined forces of the French from Fort St. Jean Baptiste des Natchitoches, Spanish from Los Adaes, and the Natchitoches and Adai Caddo Indians defeated the invading Natchez Indians. This decisive battle contributed to ending the Natchez War, saving the fledgling Louisiana colony.

“We are grateful to the Cane River National Heritage Area, Association for the Preservation of Historic Natchitoches, and National Park Service for the outstanding tours of Los Adaes, downtown Natchitoches, and the plantations of Oakland, Magnolia, and Melrose,” said Dee Niette Thompson, tribal councilwoman and historian. “We

would also like to thank our cousins Jake and Mary Rivers for the tours of the Choctaw-Apache cemetery and powwow grounds.”

In Kisatchie National Forest, the group was greeted by wild horses as they visited the location where the last wild buffalo was shot in the 1870s. The buffalo herds are gone, but sections of their migratory trails through Natchitoches Parish and Kisatchie are still visible. Also visible are two waterfalls, which are rare in the Pelican State. Multiple Indian mounds are located nearby. While within the National Forest, these areas are privately owned by tribal members.

The group headed west along the *El Camino Real* (The Royal Road) into Texas. The old network of Spanish roads were originally Indian trails going from Natchitoches to Mexico City. Portions of the El Camino Real in East Texas and Louisiana connected Adai villages, which are shown on 17th and 18th century maps. Maps showing village locations are on display at Los Adaes, Fort St. Jean Baptiste des Natchitoches, and Grand Ecore.

“Our ancestral range covered much of CENLA and East Texas,” said Robert. “For the past 500 years of documented history, the epicenter of our tribe has been and continues to be Natchitoches Parish. This was the focus of our first two trips. We want to ensure our people know their history and maintain a connection with this land, holy sites, and our ancestors.”

Next year, the tribe will visit historic sites in Natchitoches and Nacogdoches. Nacogdoches is the oldest town in Texas. It was established in 1779 by Antonio Gil Ybarbo and a band of the Adai Caddo from Los Adaes. Ybarbo is a blood relative to many members of the tribe.

To learn more about the Adai Caddo Indian Nation, please visit <http://www.adaicado.com>.

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