

## An ancient craft

### Museum teaches Native American pottery

By **HELMIA MARGUS**  
*Schools staff writer*

Young people decorating pots at LSU with seashells and sticks worked to emulate the methods used by prehistoric pot makers. The modern-day artists attended a Special Saturday program at the Museum of Natural Science on Sept. 25.

Thirteen kids showed up to make pottery in the same way as prehistoric Native Americans made pottery.

Group members layered rope-like coils from self-drying Mexican potting clay.

The coiling technique would have been used by early neo-Indians, said Rachel Watson from the Louisiana Division of Archaeology.

These people were the first pottery makers and used the containers to store food they grew, which was also a new skill.

Like their prehistoric counterparts, the young people smoothed their containers inside and out with their fingers.

They also decorated with shells and sticks. One tool was two sticks wrapped together, which was used as a stamp, said Rebecca Tedford, curatorial assistant of education at the museum.

Hannah Chen, a third-grader at LSU Lab School, made tiny scratches with a shell on top of her clay pot.

"I learned they could make almost anything with clay," Hannah said.

Sydney Roberts, a fourth-grader at Soudade Elementary in Denham Springs, created a pencil holder. She decorated it by pulling string across the surface.

"It took them a long time to do pottery," she said. Sometimes the youngsters had to start over when their efforts collapsed.

"They would have started teaching their children as itty-bitty kids so when they were adults they were very good," Watson assured them after a collapse.

When Brisha Coffee's pot collapsed, she copied her mother's project: a cup and saucer. Brisha is a Bellingrath Elementary fifth-grader.

Pottery makers made their products stronger by adding broken pottery, crushed shells, sand or fiber to the clay, instructors said.

Louisiana has a rich archaeological history that helps people understand the past and how people adapted to change, Tedford said.



Advocate staff photos by Travis Spradling

After learning how Native Americans in Louisiana made dishes from clay, from left, Ke'Gan Taylor, 8, Brisha Coffee, 9, and Marianne Konikoff, 8, make clay pots. They were at a workshop offered by the LSU Museum of Natural Science. In the background, Rachel Chen helps other students.

#### Archaeology sites in La.

■ **Marksville** site features ancient Indian civilization. The 42-acre Marksville State Historic Site is on a bluff adjacent to the town of Marksville. Archaeologists consider this prehistoric Native American ceremonial center to be of national significance. The main portion is surrounded by a semi-circular earthwork that is 3,000 feet long and ranges from 3 feet to 7 feet in height.

■ **Poverty Point** is a remnant of exceptional culture. It has been estimated that it took at least 5 million hours of labor to build a complex array of earthen mounds and ridges overlooking the Mississippi River flood plain. The age, size and character of the Poverty Point earthworks clearly place them among the most significant finds in America today. Dated between 1700 and 700 B.C., this site of more than 400 acres is unique among archaeological sites on the continent.

— Source: <http://www.ort.state.la.us/ort/poverty>



#### EVENT

New "Special Saturday" at the LSU Museum of Natural Science

"Horseshoe critic: Living fossils on our shores"  
• 10 a.m. to noon, Oct. 23  
• for ages 5 to 10  
• \$3 donation for each child requested

Advocate map