



Cahokia Mounds hosts American Indian Educational Days and annual "atlatl" competition Sept. 11-13

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COLLINSVILLE – Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site offers a chance to explore Native American culture Sept. 11-13 and watch as experts compete with the ancient “atlatl” spear-throwing device.

First, the historic site will host the World Atlatl Association’s and the Missouri Atlatl Association's annual competition Friday and Saturday, Sept. 11 and 12.

Meanwhile, American Indian Educational Days takes place Saturday and Sunday, Sept. 12 and 13, in the site’s Interpretive Center.

The atlatl (rhymes with “at battle”) is a wooden shaft, usually about 18 inches long, with a hook on one end and a hand grasp on the other. When the end of a spear was placed in the hook, a hunter could use the atlatl to propel the spear with more force and distance than when thrown with the arm alone.

Atlatls have been known to propel spears more than 800 feet at speeds topping 90 mph. These ancient devices were used for nearly 10,000 years by Native Americans before the bow and arrow were introduced around AD 600.

In this competition, national and international contestants will use traditional and modern versions of the atlatl to throw for accuracy and points. The competition will be held behind the Cahokia Mounds Interpretive Center.

Visitors are welcome to watch, and there will be an area where they can try using an atlatl.

American Indian Educational Days takes place Sept. 12 and 13 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. American Indian Educational Resources of St. Louis will provide information about Indian beliefs, customs, dress and regalia.

The weekend includes craft demonstrations and hands-on activities for children. A flute player, storyteller and dancer may also perform. The event is free.

For more information, call (618) 346-5160 or visit www.cahokiamounds.org.

Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site, administered by the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency, is just eight miles from downtown St. Louis in Collinsville, Ill., off Interstates 55/70 (exit 6) and Interstate 255 (exit 24), on Collinsville Road.

The historic site's mounds are the largest Native American earthworks north of Mexico. They were part of a huge city created by the Mississippian culture that flourished 1,000 years ago in the Midwest and South.