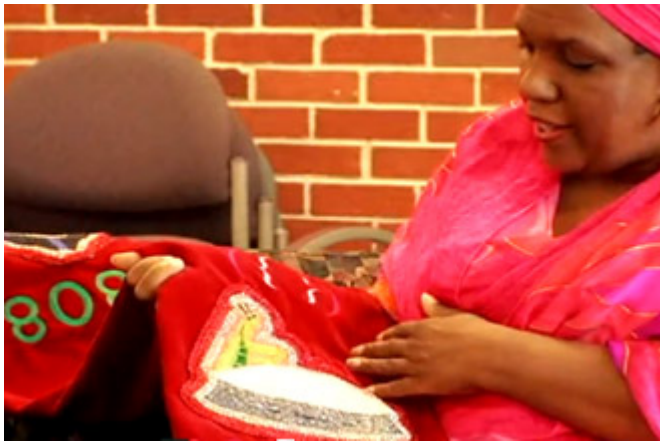


## Students Research Female Mardi Gras Indians

December 01, 2009 1:00 AM Alicia Duplessis Jasmin  
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Cherice Harrison-Nelson and her mother, Herreast Harrison, are using the cultural traditions of Mardi Gras Indians to educate young people about the roles of women in society. This semester, the Newcomb College Center for Research on Women welcomed them to work with Tulane students on a documentary about the contributions of female Mardi Gras Indians.



Cherice Harrison-Nelson, shown working on costume beading, and her mother, Herreast Harrison, have strong ties to the Guardians of the Flame Mardi Gras Indian Tribe. (Photo courtesy of the Sophielab)

"They are focused on educating young people the same as we are," says Crystal Kile, director of the [Sophielab](#), the participatory media and social media laboratory at [Newcomb College Center for Research on Women](#). "It was truly a great match."

Harrison, who is serving as the fall 2009 visiting community leader at the center, is founder of the Guardians Institute, a nonprofit organization that teaches young people the arts of embellishment beading and indigenous cultural traditions, as well as drumming and dances. The group also promotes reading and fiscal literacy, green

practices and physical well-being in the community.

Harrison-Nelson, an educator, artist and third-generation Mardi Gras Indian, has been designated the center's fall 2009 visiting scholar. She helped direct Tulane students in recording the contributions of women who mask as Mardi Gras Indians. One portion of the [documentary](#) is complete and available for viewing on the Sophielab website.

"I help to facilitate video interviews with various women in the Mardi Gras Indian tradition," says Harrison-Nelson, who also is curator of the Mardi Gras Indian Hall of Fame in New Orleans. "We are collecting the words and feelings of older Mardi Gras Indians for future generations, and we hope to use them in a mini-documentary on the Indian Queens and various Big Chiefs."

Students constructing the documentary are taking the course, [Feminist Documentation and New Media](#), taught by Betsy Weiss, adjunct assistant professor of communication. The course has a service-learning component that fulfills part of the public-service graduation requirement.