

First New Moon Of Spring At National Tribal Grounds

It began on Thursday, March 15, 2012. People began to arrive at the National Grounds of the South-eastern Cherokee Council located near Ochlocknee, Georgia. The actual ceremonial process began with the "awakening of the Grounds".

Both women and men participated in this process using natural medicine items such as water, Cedar, and Sage. The next day, this cleansing of the Grounds (to remove any latent negativity) continued in areas of the Grounds which included the Council House, the covered bridge, the memorial bridge, and the Medicine Wheel.

The ceremonial leader finished with a presentation as to the purpose and use of the Medicine Wheel. Later that evening Joyce Spirit Wind conducted a learning circle that pertained to the Native American flute. Earlier Joyce had conducted a stick weaving learning circle.

On Saturday, March 17, the fire keeper was up before dawn. The ceremonial fire was kindled using natural tinder and utilizing the 7 sacred kinds of wood as pertained to the early clan system. No matches were used to start the fire. Shortly before 8 a.m., water was provided by female members of the ceremonial team for the purpose of "going to water", to prepare for the day's ceremonies. The conch shell was sounded throughout the Grounds to summon all to the Council House for morning prayers. Smudging was performed outside the Eastern gate of the council house using the smoke of smoldering sage.

Joyce spirit Wind played meditation music on the Native American Flute as the people entered the 7 sided house of ceremony. The sacred fire was burning strongly in the center and all were

given the opportunity of approaching it with tobacco for prayers.

Rick Runningbear presented the morning prayers ceremony and Joyce played another selection on the Native American flute. Prayers of thanksgiving were presented to the Creator. Later in the morning the group assembled for the annual Council meeting. That afternoon the Ceremonial Team Of The Blue Heron Medicine Lodge met.

The highlight of the gathering was the doing of the main ceremony, namely the First New Moon Of Spring. Lee Uwoyeni Billingsley and Anne Night Wind Billingsley led out in this important traditional ceremony. This ceremony marks the end of the "cold moons" and the beginning of the planting season. Anne handed out several packets of seeds for the attendees to plant in their home gardens. It is the beginning of the new ceremonial season which will continue at least, until the cold moons are upon us again.

As is always the case, there was an abundance of good food and plenty of socializing. The blessing of coming to the National Grounds for ceremony, meetings and the promoting of brotherhood and sisterhood was felt by all.

For all our people who live too far away to attend ceremony at the National Grounds, we hope they can always benefit from their local band or clan ceremonies and also family and personal ceremony. Doing ceremony helps our spiritual life and helps keep us on the Red Road. # # #



Naming Ceremony At Bear Spirit

On May 17 of this year a naming ceremony was performed in the traditional way. Within our ranks we have the custom that when one desires to have a "Native Name" (some call it the "Natural Name") one approaches an elder who is acquainted with the applicant and presents him or her with tobacco and a respectful request to give them a Native Name. Usually this responsibility is graciously taken on by the elder and then a time of prayerful reflection is undertaken by the one who is to do the naming.

It is the custom in our "dominant society" to name children shortly after birth and to use a name with no particular meaning, but one that is in vogue or sounds good to the parent. Native names, on the other hand, mean something. The meaning matches the personality of the person named.



(above) Rick Runningbear presents ceremonial feather to Mark Soaring Eagle

Mark Dunifer, a member of the Bear Spirit Band asked to receive his Native Name, and it was granted at the Naming Ceremony on the ceremonial grounds of the Bear Spirit Band. Fire Keeper and Vice Chief Bruce Hunting Wolf was fire keeper. Also present were Terri Quiet Panther, and Chief Mike Stone Carver. Rick Runningbear performed the ceremony before all and whispered the new name into the ear of the recipient. The name was accepted. Henceforth, Mark will be also known as "Soaring Eagle". He was introduced to the 4 cardinal directions and to each person present. The ceremony was completed with the passing of the Band ceremonial pipe, officiated by Mike Stone Carvr. # # #