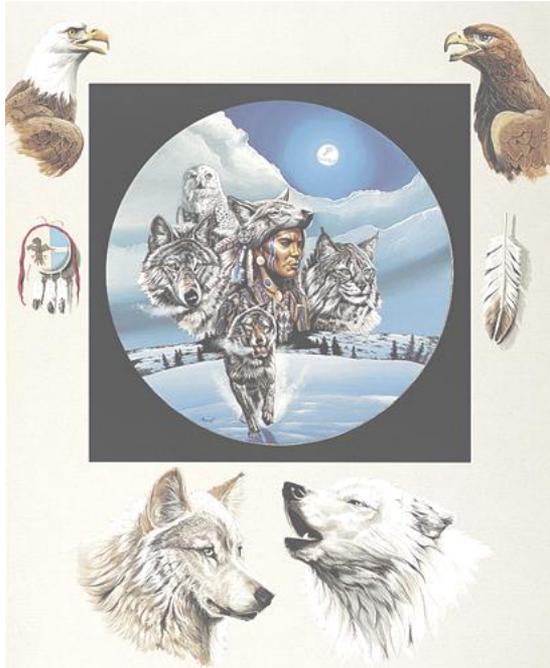


## ***TRIBAL MEMBERS ENJOY BUSY FALL WEEKEND AT TRIBAL GROUNDS***



*By Lee Spotted Pony Billingsley*

The first day on the grounds is always the time to get settled, set up the nylon lodge, greet everyone, take some time to prepare the grounds & the mound for ceremonies. The mound is decorated & the altars put together.

Saturday was the big day, the day for ceremonies as well as meetings, & everyone was involved. We began with sunrise ceremonies led by Rick Runningbear, who had earlier lit the sacred fire. We hope the ceremonies bring a spirit of closeness to the earth & each other, & we hope to have a spirit on the grounds that allows us to experience that. This is why we ask everyone to leave negativity at the gate. Some of us come a long way at some expense to be here & there needs to be a proper spirit on the grounds when we arrive. The morning ceremony sets this spirit for the grounds this day.

Great New Moon was led by Lee Spotted Pony with prayers by Anne Night Wind. The message in addition to a focus on beginnings, was that we need the proper spirit to undertake those things

we do, & sometimes need to wait until that spirit is present before starting.

From Great New Moon we went right into the celebration of Atahuna, led by Don Standing Bear. Atahuna is a time for settling differences, making apologies if needed, & the message was that these things are important to keep a good spirit within the group.

Three names were given in ceremony at the council house. There were pipe ceremonies for the men & the women. Gifts were given, important among them was a gift of Slime from Black Wolf to me for my flat tire. (it remains inflated after 1,290.8 miles)

Later in the evening we got a group together with Howling Wolf's drum & drummed, danced & sang 'til the drum went flat early because of the dampness in the air. Maybe the drum was tired. We certainly need some practice at this.

After dark we attended a warrior ceremony, led by Adam Stands Tall Warrior. This is Red Path medicine & quite different from the White Path medicine of the ceremonies during the day. Just as meaningful but in a different way. Earlier the Blue Heron Medicine Lodge members held a ceremony where Adam Stands Tall Warrior's new regalia was blessed.

At the meetings:

- Finances are not real dismal, there is just enough black ink to keep us from using red ink. Expenses & income are just about equal.
- After much discussion the Black Wolf Warrior Society has been dissolved. No one is to wear BWWS regalia any more.
- Total SeCCI membership is 5,793.
- By-laws were changed to allow for Registrar position & registration process.
- Night Wind, Medicine Crow, Howling Wolf, & Quiet River were elected as alternates. Autumn Snow is Parliamentarian, Morning Star is Orator.

- The bridge has been repaired, & Panther's golf cart is running well.

In between ceremonies & meetings was the usual feasting. Imagine a potluck with the best food in the world. This is how we do it on the grounds. Mealtimes are also General Hangout times, important for maintaining the spirit of the grounds. We get caught up on each others' lives, meet new friends, trade stories & gifts, tell some jokes & teach some crafts or culture. All done at the cook-shack table, the central gathering place when not in meetings or ceremony. This weekend the table was occupied 'til well after midnight Saturday.

Sunday when Night Wind & I left the grounds we said farewell to that huge tiger-striped spider guarding our right-hand tent door. He kept us from being invaded by ... well, by whatever it is he eats. Shawnee Running Beaver put him on a tree. After we said 'til we meet again' to everyone else we found our car did not start. It did not want to leave, apparently. We jumped the car & drove to Cordele for our pecans & fried peanuts.

With stops at Cherokee NC, Etowah & Ocmulgee mounds in GA on our way down, Anne I were made aware of how this land shows the tradition, the history, & the spirit of our Cherokee ancestors. They were close to this land, & this is the spirit we hope to keep going thru our ceremonies & our time on the tribal grounds. We are very much shaped by our land, & this is a beautiful land indeed.

*Spotted Pony*

