

Spring Gathering At National Grounds Successful

People began arriving on the tribal grounds at Ochlocknee a few days prior to the actual events scheduled to begin on October 5, 2013. They all "put their hands to the plow" and began cleaning up the grounds and the council house.

So when the majority of participants arrived on October 4th and 5th, they beheld an immaculately groomed grounds, council house, museum and elders' trailer.

Before the sun came up Saturday, October 5th, the ceremonial fire was started inside the council house by the fire keeper and two assistants. 7 kinds of ceremonial wood were incorporated into the fire in addition to ceremonial herbal medicines. Later in the morning, the people came near the council house and performed the preparatory rituals of going to water and smudging. Upon entering the 7 sided council house the people took their seats facing the fire. Rick Runningbear Dunifer led out in this Sunrise Ceremony which included a story of the "slant-eyed giant". Each participant was given the opportunity to approach the fire with an offering of tobacco and a prayer. At the conclusion of the ceremony the people formed the traditional "hug line" outside the council house.

Later that morning the people gathered at the information center and Chief Panther led out in the membership meeting. The minutes of that meeting can be read in a separate section of this newspaper.



Above: Rick Pearce shows off his hand crafts of blowguns, rattles, and ceremonial gourd masks.

The weather was very pleasant with mild temperatures and plenty of sunshine along with a gentle breeze. Some of the attendees displayed some of their hand crafts and some trading went on. Our Native ancestors did most of their trading in the Fall season of the year.

After a bountiful mid-day feast, the people sat in the shade and socialized or viewed or worked on hand crafts. A memorial service was conducted by Jack WhiteEagle Shryock at the Memorial Bridge in which the ashes of Stella Bell Fuller and James Roger Green were returned to Mother Earth. Several persons participated in this show of respect for these departed loved ones.



Above: Dannon Bagley led out in the Great New Moon Ceremony in the afternoon.

The afternoon was taken up with with ceremonial activities. Jack White Eagle Shryock led out in the Atahoon (Friends Made) ceremony. James Black Wolf let out in a pipe ceremony. These ceremonies were conducted inside the 7 sided Council House, sometimes referred to as the "Medicine Lodge" with the Fire Keeper attending the fire in the center. The people sat in a circle in the outer part of the structure so they could view the fire as well as the ceremonial leaders.

These ceremonies are connected in principle to the ancient Cherokee ceremonies that were done at certain times of the year to provide an opportunity for the people to connect with Creator, each other, and to make a new positive beginning in their lives.

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