

Great New Moon Ceremony at Bear Spirit Grounds

On September 22 of 2014, the Autumnal Equinox occurred. This cosmic event coincides with the first day of Autumn. As the earth circles the sun during the course of a year (one revolution) the earth's axis is aligned with the sun in such a way that there are equal hours of daylight and night time during a 24 hour period (one day). This is the time of balance when many Native peoples, including the Cherokee performed ceremony. The Great New Moon Ceremony for the Cherokee constituted the "New Year" as it was believed that the earth was created in the Fall of the year.

This event was celebrated at Bear Spirit Grounds, located in northeastern Tennessee. Members of the Bear Spirit Band, the Buffalo Creek Band, and several visitors attended this event to the number of 31 participants.

People Lodge, the sweat lodge, the "Hands Of Meditation" concrete seats, Bear Drink (a hollow tree trunk that catches rain water), and the many varieties of trees including various species of Oak, Maple, Hickory, Locust, Ash, Eastern Red Cedar, Beech, Wild Cherry, Sourwood, Dogwood, Redbud, and others.



Above (center) is Gary DancingBear Bitler along with other participants inside the Yurt of the Bear Spirit Grounds. Feast time!



Above is seen Sharon Gentlefawn Kelsey with granddaughter Aeryn, seated inside the yurt on the Bear Spirit Grounds.

The ceremonial leader for this event was Ty TwoEagles Kelsey and the fire keeper was Rick Runningbear Dunifer. The weather was perfect for this event with a hint of Fall coolness yet plenty of sunshine which was filtered by the many trees on the ceremonial grounds of the Bear Spirit Grounds.

After the ceremony was concluded and the people had exited from the "Sacred Circle" they partook of the "feast" which consisted of an ample amount and varieties of foods provided by the people in the form of "covered dish" preparations. A number of youth were present, being members of the "Pathfinder Club" of a nearby church. Following the feast there was drumming and singing, using the community drum located in the yurt along with hand-drums. The people enjoyed walking on the trails of the 3 acre Bear Spirit Grounds.

Items of interest to view on the Grounds are the two medicine wheels, the Winter Hot House (now under construction), the "Little



Rick Runningbear, Sharon Burnett Ty Two Eagles .