

LeChe'e Chapter hosts Traditional Weekend

By Phil Clark
 Youth of the LeChe'e community, parents, grandparents, other community members and visitors gathered at the LeChe'e Chapter House on the Navajo Nation next to Page. On June 9 and 10, 2023, the Chapter organized a variety of activities for the children in the Summer Youth Program to learn traditional skills. Almost 100 people participated and watched. This is the first such event of this kind for the

Chapter and more are planned in the future. The event coincided with the June 1 "Treaty Day" commemorating the day, in 1868, when a treaty was signed after the Long Walk, ending conflict between the US Government and the Navajo people, or the Dine'. The clear, sunny morning started with the butchering of the first of two sheep that were then prepared in the traditional manner. Adults mentored the children. All of

the sheep parts are used either for food or clothing. The mutton meat was prepared for a barbecue. Tripe was cleaned and twisted on itself and grilled. Blood and organs were mixed with potatoes to make sausage. The women of the community worked at different tables to prepare for the barbecue. As one man I spoke with said, "This is traditionally women's work." The only man involved with the preparation of the meat was a man who used a modern electric saw to cut the spine into smaller pieces. He says that's how he prepared his calves, and it saves time. The mutton was grilled and served with fry bread and tortillas.

While the meat was being prepared, another group of women and children prepared Navajo cake. The cake is traditionally made as part of the Kinaalda ceremony. The Kinaalda ceremony is held when a girl comes of age. Seven grease-wood branches are held together with a string and is used to stir and thoroughly mix white corn meal, germinated wheat or wheat germ, brown sugar and boiling water. The batter is traditionally poured in a bowl-shaped depression in the ground, lined with burlap sacks and covered with a layer of corn husks and burlap. A layer of sand covers the burlap and hot coals are placed on top

until the cake is done in the morning. At the event, aluminum pans were lined with corn husks, filled with batter and covered with corn husks again before being covered with sand and coals. By Saturday morning, the cake was removed from the coals and shared with people who arrived at the Chapter House.

Other activities included watching the movie "Nemo" in Navajo and a movie about the Long Walk. Children received books in Navajo to help them learn the language and gift baskets from a local discount store. One of the adults read to the children in Navajo. A native plant called Navajo Tea was ready to be harvested and used as a traditional healing tea.

During the event, Navajo Nation Emergency Medical Services demonstrated their equipment and ability to provide emergency services to the Navajo Nation by offering to check blood pressure for free. Based in Tuba City, Arizona, Navajo EMS has the largest service area in the United States, with 13 field offices and 50 ambulances in service. Navajo EMS is recruiting for EMT Basic, Intermediate and Paramedics, including Emergency Medical Responders and EMT-Recruits. For more information, or to apply, call 928-871-6410 or



Posing with a delicious looking piece of mutton. All photos by Phil Clark.



Two women prepare batter for Navajo cake.



A young lady learns to prepare mutton for the grill.



Children line up to receive free books written in the Navajo language



Batter for Navajo cake is being readied to pour in the cooking pans.



Navajo cake pans are placed in the traditional wood fire.



Adults and children pose before eating Navajo cake.



A young lady harvests Navajo tea.



A child examines the sheep skins and hooves.



A layer of sand is placed on top of the cake pans.



Coals and wood are placed on the sand to cook the Navajo cakes.

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