

# DAYS OF SAKHA - YAKUT CULTURE

FRIDAY, JUNE 21 AT 5 P.M.



Serge installed at the Gualala Arts Center

The Gualala Arts Center has hosted a wide variety of art and culture over the years, but last summer it was given a unique opportunity - in the form of a wooden hitching post.

For those who have seen it in passing, it may look like a simple piece of wood, but it represents much more. This post, or serge, is a traditional horse hitching post given to the Arts Center by a delegation of Yakutian people from the Sakha Republic in the Russian Federation. The delegation was part of the non-government Yakutian organization "Elleyada." In the Sakha Republic serge hitching posts are established near a family's house, and they aren't just for horses - they represent man's desire to survive through climatic and natural obstacles. Yakutian people were hired to come to this area of California in the 19th century and work at Fort Ross, and this serge pays tribute to those first Yakutians to make their home in the United States.

The serge at the Arts Center was officially established on July 30, 2012, during the Fort Ross bicentennial celebration. It was carved at the fort by members of the Yakutian delegation and then brought to the Arts Center and installed in the ground. Another serge was also made and established at the Timber Cove Inn just south of Gualala Arts. Ritual ceremonies were held at the installation of each serge, with traditional Yakutian blessings, dancing, and shamanic rituals. These are the only two serge posts in the entire United States.

If you missed the serge ceremonies last year, never fear - you haven't lost the opportunity to share in the celebration of this special honor. Another ceremony will be held this summer to dedicate a plaque for the serge at the Arts Center on Friday, June 21 at 5 p.m.. In addition, the Yakutian delegation will be back in town next year and the Global Harmony Series will present, "Days of Sakha (Yakut) Culture," an arts festival celebrating the Yakutian culture with an art exhibit, a lecture, and a performance. The weeklong events will conclude with the traditional holiday "Ysyakh" on Saturday, June 21, 2014.

Please check back on our website for more updates regarding this summer's ceremony and next year's festivities!