



Sakha Cultural Festival

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 18 THRU SUNDAY, JUNE 22

Poland and New York. Examples of his art can be seen at the Sakha Culture exhibit.

The same evening a performance art selection will showcase this intriguing culture. The Yakut people are the largest ethnic group in the Sakha Republic, a state with a population of almost a million people. It is located in eastern Siberia and spans three time zones.

The Yakut share a story remarkably similar to the local Pomo in California. The discovery of gold and the building of the Trans-Siberia Railway brought ever-increasing numbers of Russians to their isolated region. Persecution by the Soviet government in the 1920s reduced their numbers to one-half of the current population, but they now form the federation's majority population and are experiencing a revival of their culture.

The festival continues through Sunday, June 22, with classes in jewelry, wood carving, and other Yakut crafts at Gualala Arts Center and at Fort Ross. Dinners at both venues will feature Sakha cuisine. Also, there will be talks on the role Yakut played at Fort Ross, on their spiritual beliefs, and the lifestyle and cultural revival of indigenous people.

On Sunday, the festival concludes with a sunrise greeting at Gualala Point Regional Park, including traditional rituals and dances. The kumis ritual involves food, which the Yakut believe must have a soul to be truly nourishing. After a breakfast, the program includes competition in wrestling and other traditional sports. The closing ceremony will take place at noon.

The 40-member delegation and other visitors from around the world will be hosted in various locations up and down the coast. Hank Birnham and Robin Joy Wellman from Fort Ross are coordinating the programs with Sue Bechtel, Caryl Hart, Sonoma County Parks and "Sus" Susalla, Gualala Arts Executive Director.

The 2014 Global Harmony Season of Offerings series includes seven performances from around the world, which showcase cultures spanning several centuries.

The 2014 Global Harmony Season of Offerings culminates with a week-long festival on the Mendonoma coast with activities at Gualala Arts Center, Fort Ross and the Gualala Point Regional Park.

The scheduled events further strengthen the bond between the coast community and the Yakut people of the Sakha Republic in the Russian Federation, who first arrived as hired workers at Fort Ross and reconnected during the two-hundredth anniversary of the settlement in 2012.

On Wednesday, June 18, the festival begins at Gualala Arts Center with a reception and official opening of an exhibit with displays of Sakha costumes and other artifacts. It will feature the art of Andrey Chikachev, a well-known Sakha artist, whose work captures the daily life of the Yakut people. He has had exhibitions throughout Russia, as well as in Mongolia,