

Lamas visiting

BY SAGE
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A festival celebrating Tibetan and First Nations spiritual traditions is underway this week at Xats'ull Heritage Village in Soda Creek, 35 kilometres north of Williams Lake.

Things got off to a fast start Tuesday, July 20, as two Tibetan lamas began the laborious construction of a sand mandala that will take five days to create.

A large circle of drummers and guests welcomed the five-member Tibetan delegation that includes three lamas, Lama Lobsang Tulku, Lama Tenzin Tsundula and Lama Kalzang; a geshe (a Tibetan Doctor of Philosophy), Gendun Yonten; and an interpreter, Rinzin Dorjee.

The celebration jointly sponsored by the Xats'ull First Nation and the Spirit Dance Centre for Spiritual Ecology is open to the public. Gates open at 9 a.m. each day with day-long viewing of the sand mandala construction until 5 p.m. Admission is by donation.

Other events each day throughout the festival include morning meditations and chanting, informal open discussion times, personal healing sessions with Lama Lobsang, and healing sessions with Manyhorses and other First Nations healers.

Each afternoon will include First Nations teachers and story-telling, Tibetan teachings and presentations, inter-cultural discussions between the Tibetans and First Nations, prayer flag

making and other ceremonies.

Ceremonial sweat lodges will be offered in the evenings, along with informal discussions, First Nations drumming and traditional dancing.

Cheryl Chapman, organizer for Xats'ull, said at the opening she only expected eight drummers.

"And there are at least 17 drummers here today."

Xats'ull spiritual leader Ralph Phillips said he was told by elders back in 1978 that gatherings like this were going to happen, bringing spiritual traditions together.

Lama Lobsang Tulku, on behalf of the Tibetans, said their main message is to preserve nature and to foster an exchange between cultures based on nature.



East meets west

Xats'ull Chief Dorothy Phillips and Lama Lobsang Tulku share a greeting at the Medicine Ways gathering in Xats'ull Heritage Village. The gathering concludes Sunday with a ceremonial dismantling of the sand mandala. Sage Birchwater photo