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CALUSA DAY BUSY AT HISTORICAL VILLAGE

March 28, 2014 - About 800 people, including many children, came to Calusa Day at the Sanibel Historical Museum and Village last Wednesday. The event began last year as part of the state of Florida's celebration, FLORIDA 500, commemorating the Spanish landing on Florida shores in 1513. Juan Ponce de Leon landed in the general area of Sanibel and made contact with the indigenous people, the Calusa. So many islanders and visitors showed interest in that part of Sanibel's history, that the village repeated the event this year.



Two young Calusa warriors with masks they painted during Calusa Day festivities

Guests to the village were guided among portions of the museum's collection of Calusa artifacts by docents Bonnie Frankel and Susan Schmidt, both Calusa enthusiasts, and the movie "The Domain of the Calusa" was available for viewing throughout the day.

Children were invited to color different designs of Calusa masks, which were then attached to sticks (actually paint stirrers provided by Bailey's Hardware Store), so the children could hold the masks in front of their faces. This was an enormously popular activity both with the children and their parents. "It was touching to see the Old Schoolhouse desks filled once again with children working on a project," said museum manager Emilie Alfino. "It helped one imagine what it was like in the old days."

In the afternoon, Calusa buff Karen Nelson, a board member of the Southwest Florida Archeological Society, spoke in the Old Schoolhouse, where artifacts from the Wightman dig on Captiva and displays of Calusa art and shell mounds were

available for viewing. Nelson recounted the history of the Calusa from their arrival in South Florida to their extinction from wars and European diseases. Her focus was on the Calusa's relationship with the Spanish. Some experts believe there could be Calusa descendents in Cuba, but that is far from documented.

Joining Nelson was Theresa M. Schober, MA, author of "Art Calusa: Reflections on Representation." Schober is an archeologist and cultural resource consultant working in south Florida since 1998. For nine years, she directed the restoration and exhibit development at Mound House and Newton Park on Fort Myers Beach. Schober's book is filled with high-quality pictures of Calusa art and other artwork (four of Lucas Century's pieces are featured). It is available for purchase at the Gift Shop of the Sanibel Historical Museum. The price, including tax, is \$26.50.

Learn more at the Sanibel Historical Museum and Village open Wednesdays through Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Full guided tours take place at 10:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. each day at no additional charge. Beginning in May, the village changes to off-season hours, which are Wednesdays through Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., with a tour at 10:30. The Sanibel Historical Museum and Village is located at 950 Dunlop Road (next to BIG ARTS). Admission is \$10 for adults (18 and over); members and children are free. For more information, call 472-4648 during museum hours or visit www.sanibelmuseum.org.
