

Article for Emmons County Record for 9th Annual Meeting of NHC by Shelly Hauge

Visitors poured into Linton from the far reaches of the country to converge on the Kuntz Nokota Ranch for the Nokota Horse Conservancy's 9th Annual meeting held June 14 – June 17, 2007. States represented included North Dakota (of course), Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Massachusetts, Georgia, Florida, and Washington - with the first group (our Florida friends) arriving a week in advance of the meeting to assist with many of the final preparations.

Four full days of activities made for a hectic schedule, but one that everyone enjoyed to the fullest. Thursday started us off with a visit to the Horses on the Prairie Camp – a 4-week day camp for Native American youth. The camp is run by United Tribes Technical College for 3rd through 6th grade children and strives to teach long-term skills in Science and Math by giving them hands on experience with testing soils, plants and water. All this is combined with the Nokota horses as the counselors aim to reconnect these eager students with the horse culture of their ancestors. After many hours spent mingling with the horses and collecting many samples for later testing, the group met at Seeman Park for an evening of fun and education. Of course, most of the "education" was for the adults who joined in the dance lessons being taught by Butch Thunder Hawk to the beat of a native drum group. Butch's style is easy and magnetic, while naturally evoking respect and admiration for his wisdom, inner strength and kindness. The activities went until dark and even then there was great hesitation to end such a magical night.

Friday dawned with much excitement about the coming day and the planned pasture tours at the Kuntz Ranch. Hastily eaten breakfasts were consumed only for their ability to keep the hunger at bay so the remainder of the day could be spent in heaven!! Seth Zeigler and Frank and Leo Kuntz all did their part to educate and highlight the different characteristics, colorations and bloodlines of the hundreds of Nokota horses and the numerous new foals as they moved from pasture to pasture to see everything possible there was to see. Evening came much too quickly, but the day ended with a pacifying of sweet teeth at the Chamber-sponsored Dessert Social, followed by "Lazy Eye", the live band that lit up Linton's Main Street with its powerful sounds and familiar tunes. There's nothing like a good street dance to liven things up!!

Saturday morning found the Conservancy's board of directors meeting at the St. Michael's Catholic Church Hall, with various caffeinated products within easy reach. A very productive morning session ended in time for a hearty lunch prepared by Helen Fischer of Hague. The afternoon session started with official introductions of all in attendance and a stirring opening prayer by Butch Thunder Hawk. A brief

recap of the morning's discussions and decisions was made prior to launching into a more lengthy examination and deliberation of the breed registry program and some proposed changes. And from there we dove into the Management Programs, Outreach and Research and Development issues. A very productive meeting, all in all, was adjourned at 3:45 PM. It was at that point that the socializing began in earnest! The kids, of which we had a record number, instigated an innocent water balloon fight that escalated into a full-blown "shower" for the majority of the younger population! The kids had a BLAST, and the parents were quite benevolent if I might say so, enjoying the time spent with other Nokota supporters and visitors in the relative quiet of the Hall. Terry Vetter graciously agreed to cook our infamous "cream can" dinner to the cheers of the crowd! And the evening ended with an incredible lightning display, but not before a brief campfire at the Kuntz Ranch.

Then came Sunday and a very "iffy" weather forecast for our Father's Day breakfast and Art-in-the-Park! But we persevered, as we all do from time to time, and fell to Plan B, moving the meal into the Pavilion at Seeman Park – wondering the whole time what we were going to do with all the extra food! Well, who would've guessed that we would run out of food ... not once, but twice!! We had a **spectacular** turnout and couldn't have been more pleased to see so many locals there, greeting our visitors and enjoying what turned out to be a beautiful day. Kristi Goldade added her own special touch to the event with her singing and yodeling talents. WOW! And many thanks to Joe Schlosser as well who appeared with his draft team and wagon and spent the afternoon further augmenting the Nokota experience with a touch of old-time western flair to the scenic surroundings of the park.

I also need to interject a quick thank you to Dawn Hager for providing all the sweets and to both she and Christa Kuntz for their assistance throughout the events – we couldn't have made things appear as seamless as they did without their help!

A year in the planning and it was over in an instant! Here's to next year and celebrating our 10th annual meeting. Hope to see you all there.