

First Native American dwelling complete at Catawba Meadows

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The first of two Native American replica dwellings has been erected at the Catawba Meadows Archeological Interpretive center at Catawba Meadows Park.

The replica is the permanent one of the two structures that was built with conventional construction methods so that it will last over time.

According to a press release, the building is based closely on the 16th century Native American dwellings excavated at Berry and Catawba Meadows archaeological sites.

Staff archeologist for the Exploring Joara Foundation, John Krebs, said the building will last for at least 20 years and help visitors understand what life was like some 200 years before the first settlers invaded America.

“(The dwellings) will help people to see what their structures looked like and to walk and see how they lived,” Krebs said. “We’ve made it wheelchair accessible so that it’s ADA compliant and we’ve lightened the room so that people could see in it. Normally, the houses were much darker.”

Krebs also said that the structures will help with field trips to the site.

The dwelling is a 25-foot square with rounded corners and an artificial thatched roof to keep it from catching on fire.

To the right of the main entrance of the structure, designers left a cut away section so that visitors can see a snap shot of the interior walls.

Crews have some minor work remaining, including daubing the permanent structure.

Once the daubing is complete, Krebs said the dwelling will be filled with benches, hammocks, leather furs and various Native American items.

The other dwelling will be built over the next year will feature a house built with Native American methods. The structure will be made out of natural trees and materials as opposed to the pressed wood used to complete the permanent dwelling.

According to Krebs, the permanent dwelling cost \$40,000 and was funded entirely by grants from the Huffmann Cornwell Foundation and the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area.

In addition to the dwellings, the interpretive center houses an interpretive garden, a meeting plaza and a palisade wall built almost entirely by Burke County students.

To schedule a field trip to the interpretive center, call 828-439-2463 or email the Foundation at ejf@exploringjoara.org.

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