

Thousands Celebrate With the Maroons

Thousands of Jamaicans and visitors gathered in Accompong, St. Elizabeth, on January 6 to celebrate the 274th anniversary of the Peace Treaty, which was signed between the Maroons and the British Government.

The annual event attracted even more attention this year, as it is one of the official events of Jamaica 50, to mark the country's 50th anniversary of independence.

There were cultural presentations and traditional observations throughout the day, with activities running from daybreak until late in the night.

Addressing the official opening, Principal Director of Culture in the Ministry of Youth and Culture, Sydney Bartley, pointed out that had it not been for that peace treaty signed in 1738, many other subsequent treaties would not have been signed.

"If it had not been for the continuous struggle of people like Cudjo, and Nanny (of the Maroons) and so many others, we would not (be celebrating) today. We would be expected to be somewhere cutting cane," he said.

Colonel of the Accompong Maroons, Ferron Williams (left), having a quiet conversation with council member of the Charles Town Maroons, Frank Lumbsden, during the celebrations January 6. Mr. Bartley argued that the independence movement for Jamaica did not begin in 1962, but instead with the resistance staged by all Africans at the point of their capture in their homeland. He insisted that as we celebrate Jamaica's 50th anniversary of independence, it is important for the people to remember the struggles.

"We need to ritualise the important elements of our lives. Too many Jamaicans are moving around today, not even stopping to think that this is an important day in our calendar. Without this day, many other days might not have happened," he emphasised.

In his message, read by Custos of St. Elizabeth, Hon. Wilfred Nembhard, Governor General, His Excellency the Most Hon. Sir Patrick Allen, described the Maroons as an integral part of the rich history of Jamaica.

He argued that when people have a strong sense of self identity through culture, they are more likely to interact peacefully with other cultures, with respect for the diversity of value systems and religious beliefs.

"This fluid nature of culture can be positive, leading to stronger societal structures and values. Respect, appreciation, tolerance and a basic understanding of fundamental human rights, are tenets that have aided in the maintenance and preservation of the culture of the Maroons," the Governor General said.