



Paco Ibarra of the Leh-Nah-Weh Native American Organization conducts a dedication ceremony Thursday for a carving of Shawnee warrior and leader Tecumseh at Tecumseh Middle School. TELEGRAM PHOTO BY MIKE DICKIE

Carving dedicated

Leh Nah Weh members lead ceremony at Tecumseh school

By David Frownfelder
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TECUMSEH — A carving of Shawnee warrior and leader Tecumseh was dedicated during a ceremony Thursday morning in front of the Tecumseh Middle School. Members of the Leh Nah Weh Native American Organization, led by Paco Ibarra of Adrian, conducted the ceremony.

Several classes of fifth-grade students attended the ceremony at the carving, which was a sycamore tree cut down for safety purposes last summer. Ibarra purified the carving using an eagle feather to fan smoke from a burn dish and then sprinkled seeds around the base of the 12-foot-tall depiction.

"The smoke is for spiritual guidance," he said.

Rick Hilderley, Tecumseh Middle School principal,

hosted the brief ceremony. Starting the project in July, Hilderley contacted Leh Nah Weh to ask about the depiction and eventually talked with representatives of the Absentee Shawnee Tribe of Arizona, which includes many ancestors of Tecumseh.

After guidance was given, Hilderley began the search for someone to do the carving. Michigan wood-carver Emil Szkipala of Chesterfield Township used a chainsaw and chisels to carve the likeness of the city's namesake into the stump of a hewn sycamore tree in front of the school, 307 N. Maumee St.

Using the photo of a bronze casting of Tecumseh that is displayed in southern Illinois, Szkipala carved the statue. Hilderley applied the final sealant to the depiction, which shows Tecumseh holding a tomahawk/pipe