

## Black Seminoles mark history

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JUPITER — On Saturday, Jan. 19 during the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday weekend, Native Americans, including the Black Seminoles, along with dignitaries and civic groups recognized the landmark 175th anniversary of a turning point in history.

That was when up to 300 Native and African-American Seminoles made their last major stand against some 1,500 U.S. troops and Tennessee Volunteers in a combination of two battles fought on the banks of the Loxahatchee — or “River of Turtles” — in northern Palm Beach County.

The daylong event at the Loxahatchee River Battlefield Park, 9060 Indiantown Rd., in Jupiter was recognized with presentations, speeches and music.

The Seminoles, who were survivors of the largest and bloodiest clash of the Second Seminole War — the Christmas Day, 1837 Battle of Lake Okeechobee — had regrouped in a settlement along the Loxahatchee River, where, on Jan. 15, 1838, they prevailed in a confrontation known as Powell’s Battle against a small force of inexperienced naval personnel.

### RETALIATION

But on the 24th, they faced much greater odds in a second, retaliatory attack against their encampment, known as Jesup’s Battle, in which they were not defeated, but a large number of survivors accepted a subsequent invitation, under a white flag of truce, to come to Fort Jupiter.

There they were captured and either delivered to “slave catchers” from states to the north of Florida, or deported on the deadly Trail of Tears to reservations west of the Mississippi River.

The saga of both the Seminoles and the soldiers comprises a human drama of heroism and suffering, treachery and triumph, vital to understanding American society today.

The popular Annual Seminole Maroon Commemoration takes on even greater significance this year, as part of the “Viva Florida observance of the 500th anniversary of the landing of Spanish explorer Juan Ponce de Leon on the peninsula that he would name “la Florida” in 1513, nearly a century before the first English settlement at Jamestown.

This occasion provided a significant opportunity for many to reflect upon the rich and complex legacy of collective history since that world-changing landfall half a millennium ago.

Numerous other anniversaries being observed this year will shed more light on that legacy.

Thus the additional significance of the commemoration on the Dr. MLK Jr. weekend at the site of the Loxahatchee River Battlefield.

## MASSACRE

The first of the landmark anniversaries observed this year was 90 years since the Rosewood Massacre in Levy County, which began on Jan. 1, 1923.

For more information visit: [loxahatcheebattlefield.com](http://loxahatcheebattlefield.com) or the Florida Black Historical Research Project: [fbrpinc.org](http://fbrpinc.org)