

TRIBAL PROGRAM NEWS

First Annual Circle of Wisdom

by Shirley Ben Walker
Elders Council Chairman

I would like to thank all of the tribal members and our extended families who helped make the Elders Gathering at Chinook Winds Casino on May 19 a success.

Sister Francella gave invocation at lunch and dinner. A special thank you to our Tribal Council for their continued support of our Elders. Jessie Davis worked many hours on the dentalium necklaces for the honored guests. Thank you, Jessie. We appreciate all that you do for us.

We appreciate the assistance we received from all of the employees at Chinook Winds, especially Scott Macrae and Eddie Sargent. They worked with us on planning the event and were on hand to provide all of the help we needed. Bob Tom was the master of ceremonies and we were fortunate to obtain his assistance. He was also involved in the NW Indian Education Summit. Bob is a well-known and respected Elder in our Tribe. He worked on our restoration, served many years as the higher education director, and helped many students achieve their goals.

We had visiting tribes from Coos Bay, Warm Springs, Lower Umpqua, Grand Ronde, Siuslaw, Klamath, Umatilla, Cow Creek, Chetco, Yakama and Wasco. Arleen Perkins of the Coos Tribe presented an eagle feather dream catcher to the Siletz Tribe as a thank you gift. It will be on display at the administration building in Siletz. Bob Tom asked if there was a member of the Makah Nation at the gathering. Karen Hunter, a teacher from the Makah Tribe, was attending the NW Indian Education Summit and I asked her to join our Circle of Friendship. Ed Ben stated, "I'm Ed Ben of the Siletz Tribe and we support the Makah Tribe." All other tribes pledged their support. It is important that we, as Indian people, not allow any city or state government to infringe on our sovereign rights. Ed honored Karen with a dentalium necklace from the Ben family. Karen in return honored us with a song from her tribe.

Bill Burke, Umatilla Tribe and Chief of the Walla Walla, attended our meeting and shared information with us regarding national issues on the Council of Aging. Bill is our Northwest representative and we supported him at last year's national council in North Dakota. Our next national seminar will be Aug. 20, 2000, in Duluth, Minn. Cathy Rasmussen, community health director, set up a special table and helped



Participants (above) at the Elders Gathering include Gladys Staggs, Sister Francella, Mercelene Flagg, Doris Riding In, Emma Russell, and Maxine Rilatos. Feather dancers perform (below).



care for the health of honored guests. Cathy, assisted by her staff, did blood pressure checks and diabetes screenings. Lesia Warner-Elzie did a presentation on health and nutrition. We are proud to have such dedicated employees willing to serve our Elders.

Sherry Eddings shared a story on the history of the Grand Ronde and Siletz Agency. Our sister tribe, Grand Ronde, assisted us many years ago when we had to help each other or suffer death because of the government agent. Kay Steele was our "Old Lady" in the story, Bob Tom was the wise Chief to the Siletz, and Randy Austin was the government agent.

The Elders spent several months making dentalium necklaces and other special gifts for our guests. The casino donated gift bags as well. Special thanks to my sister-in-law, Delores Ben, for helping me finish my part of the necklaces.

The feather dancers made a special appearance before dinner. Buddy Lane has worked hard to teach our young people the culture of the Tolowas. Terry Russell, Randy Austin and Robert Kentta also supported the program with their attendance. They do a fantastic job of representing our tribe.

At the end of the day, the Siletz Elders formed a line at the front of the room and invited members of the other tribes to come forward to present their gifts. We were truly blessed that day with such a feeling of respect for all people. As Tribal Elders, if we could somehow transfer that to all other nations, it would be a great benefit to all mankind.

I have tried to acknowledge everyone who participated in the May event. If I have overlooked someone, please make allowances for me. I am still new at this and learning.