

# 4<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL TRIBAL YOUTH RETREAT



## Siletz Youth Head to Westwind for Sand, Surf, Smudging, and Storytelling

photos and article by Laurel Johnson

As sunshine broke through Sunday morning's clouds, 48 Siletz tribal youth and 22 adult staff members crossed the Salmon River to Westwind for this year's Youth Retreat, Nov. 11-12. Above the riverbank, a bald eagle watched as the campers boarded the barge that would carry them and their gear to the other side.

Once part of the original Coast Reservation, Westwind – a nature center for retreats, education, and research – features over 500 acres of wilderness beach, salmon-bearing rivers, and upland forests and meadows. Access by river boat near the mouth of the Salmon River, ensures Westwind's solitude and wildness.

Upon arrival to the center's main lodge, the campers registered and then set off to find their cabins. Later they returned to the lodge where they were greeted by Robert Kentta, Nick Sixkiller and Walt Klamatch during opening ceremonies. After lunch, the youth enjoyed getting to know one another during "Mixing it Up" activities led by Delina John, Rachelle Endres, Katy Kaady, Robert Kentta, and other

staff members. Then, to everyone's delight, the youth enjoyed a walk on the beach in the afternoon sun.

Sunday's dinner was followed by a treasure hunt as the youth used clues and their flashlights to find various colored flags at mysterious locations such as "the fork in the road."

A few treasure seekers took some of the flags and hid them in different places, making it difficult for each member in each group to find a different colored flag to wear back to the lodge, where they would receive their final clue. Two of the teams decided to work together, sharing their flags so each group was successful in getting their final clue.

Finally, one group was able to decipher the map and made their way to the treasure's location where they dug up a large purple box – the treasure! Upon opening, they found many surprises to share – jump ropes, Frisbees, Siletz Tribal T-shirts, pencils, and more.

One of the treasure seekers said, "There was too much sand." Many of the youth said, "It was fun!"

After the treasure hunt, some of the youth played a game of hacky sack while others enjoyed snacks. Then everyone sat in a large circle in the main lodge as Ed Edmo, Walt Klamatch, and Mark Pullam told stories of the Tribal people's creation, beaver's wisdom, coyote's tricks, and other legends.

The next morning, the youth woke to the ominous sounds of wind and rain. As they ate their breakfast inside the warm lodge, the youth watched the high surf pound the beach.

With wood fires burning, Robert Kentta taught the youth how to weave bear grass in the main lodge. Meanwhile in the Learning Center, Cyndi Urbach and Darcy de la Rosa showed the youth how to make smudge pots with dried sage, cedar, and sacred tobacco.

The youth also gave suggestions for future retreats. Georgia Downey, a 16-year-old from Mill City who thought the retreat was good overall, said to combat claustrophobia, "We could play more outdoor games, or be creative and play like we used to play in the Tribe, or go on nature walks." Zach Leckie, 13, of Siletz, said, "This year's retreat is good, but we

need more conferences more often like these so kids can stay out of trouble."

Gloria Hutchinson, 13, of Lincoln City, said, "I think this is pretty fine – this is my second time to come, but I'd like to have it at a different place because it's all sandy and rainy, not really comfortable." Miles Logan, 14, of Lincoln City, said, "This year's retreat is really fun, but I'd like it to last longer!"

Samantha Gamboa, 15, from Turner, remarked, "The conference is really great because I get to meet new people. But what could be different is the guys can have the top cabins so they can travel up the huge hills every day."

Eleezia Howard, 13, of Salem-Keizer, suggested that the cabins have "more heat." Paul Simmons, 15, from Salem, added, "I liked the camp because I got to do some things I don't normally do, like camp out and hang out with other kids. I also really liked the storytelling."

Following the sessions, everyone gathered in the main lodge for a closing ceremony and goodbye hugs. Then, as Monday's rains let up, the youth loaded their gear for the return trip home.