



Ed Ben

Photo by Brent Merrill

Pow-Wow a Showcase for Drummers, Dancers

by Brent Merrill

This year's annual Nesika Illahee Pow-Wow in Siletz turned out to be a showcase for drummers, dancers, Elders, youth, weddings, honoring ceremonies, visiting dignitaries and even the weather.

Drummers and dancers from all over the Indian nations made their way to Siletz for the pow-wow that started on August 7 with an evening royalty pageant and finished on August 10 with the final grand entry on the Pauline Ricks Memorial Pow-Wow Grounds.

Elders and their youthful protégés danced throughout the arena to make this event memorable and pow-wow emcee Nick Sixkiller tried his hand at weddings when he performed a ceremony on August 9 for a young couple dressed in traditional white buckskin and a red ribbon shirt.

The star of the show may have been the weather as it alternately rained on and cooked attendees with cold showers and then sunny stretches that made the whole arena smell like wet grass.

New Tribal royalty – Jennifer Easter as Miss Siletz, Rose Pigsley as Jr. Miss Siletz and Ashliegh Ramirez as Siletz Princess – were crowned on August 8 just before the first grand entry.

The next day began with a parade that started at the Tribal administration building and made its way through the streets of Siletz before finishing at the pow-wow grounds at Government Hill. The parade featured many local Tribal youth and Tribal Council members as well as the local mounted posse, several law enforcement agencies and local car show enthusiasts.

A float from Chinook Winds Casino Resort featured Tribal youth and there was a special appearance by the three traditional Warm Springs chiefs. The three traditional chiefs were the guests of honor and served as grand marshals for the parade.

"The pow-wow was great this year," said Tribal Chairman Delores Pigsley. "The grand marshals were a hit with the audience."

Pigsley said the Warm Springs delegation was honored with a treaty blanket and a special luncheon after the parade.

Siletz Tribal Elders Ed Ben and William DePoe were joined by the Warm Springs representatives to start grand entry on August 9 at 1 p.m.

Dancers from all over Indian Country filled the dance arena all afternoon, breaking only to dry off from the summer showers or the sweat of dancing in the heat in regalia.

Tribal youth San Poil Whitehead was honored that afternoon with a gift of a hand drum. The pow-wow was stopped, San Poil received his honor from good friend David West while surrounded by family, friends and community members.

The grand entry on August 10 led the way for the contest dancers to get in their final attempts to woo the judges and pow-wow attendees to get their last Indian tacos and fry bread. Dance prizes ranged from \$25 to \$500 for first place in a major category.

"We place high value and take pride in the way we have been preserving our heritage," said Pigsley.



Photo by Natasha Kavanaugh