

# Gathering offers chance for students to celebrate success in education

By Diane Rodriguez

Words of praise and encouragement greeted students who attended the annual Student Gathering held June 21 at the Tribe's Hee Hee Illahee RV Resort in Salem, Ore.

"Thank you for being here and I think we should take the time to thank our Tribal Council for always doing a good job for making education No. 1 on their list and to make sure our kids are educated. They give us the money to guarantee that the door's open on tuition," said emcee Nick Sixkiller, education specialist in the Eugene Area Office.

He described education as "a shield to protect ourselves, our bows and arrows, whatever it takes to defend ourselves to make sure we stay here as American Indians on our ancestral land. It takes education to do that," he said. "We're very proud of our community getting educated and moving on. We hope that at one point in your lifetime, you can come back and support the Tribe."

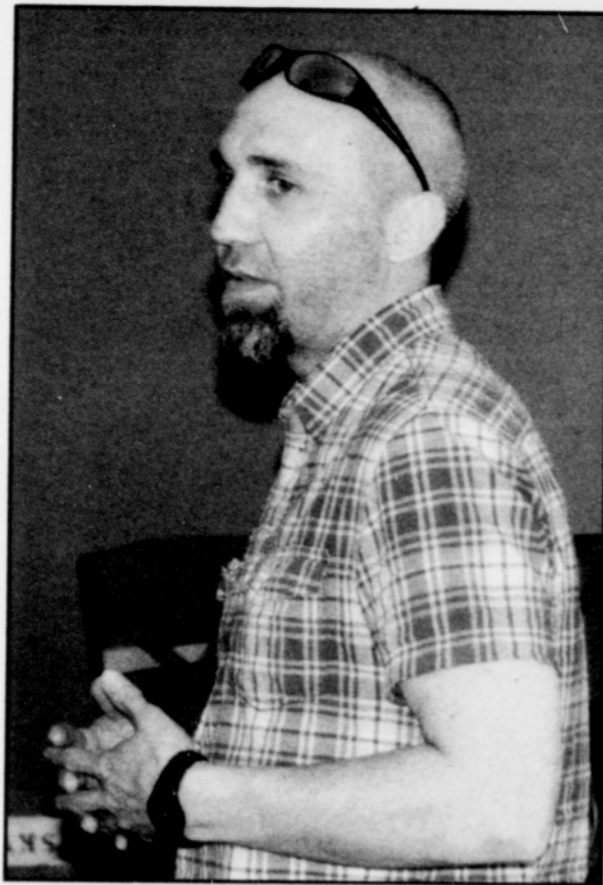
Following the theme of giving back to the Tribe, Katy Holland, education specialist in the Portland Area Office, introduced Brian Stilwell, "a gentleman in Portland who has gone back to school and is just doing amazing. He had a dream and he's living it out."

Stilwell is working on a bachelor's of arts degree at the Art Institute of Portland.

"My dream has always been wanting to get into movies and television to tell a story that I've been working on for a long time as well as getting involved with the Tribe more. I've always been interested in Indians, of course, and to be involved with the Tribe even more so, I would hope to be able eventually to work on a video documentary about the Tribe. That's a goal I've been working toward," said Stilwell. "I appreciate so much the Tribe's help. I wouldn't be able to do this without everybody's support. It makes me feel like I'm part of a nice community, which is something I haven't felt when I was growing up."

Holland described the journey of Elizabeth Viles, who was a "college intern who worked with me and all our youth and they just loved her. She worked in the Portland office and she's just become like family to us."

Viles also worked closely with Dean Azule at Portland State University in a suicide prevention program, giving presentations to Tribal youth in Uma-



Brian Stilwell



Elizabeth Viles

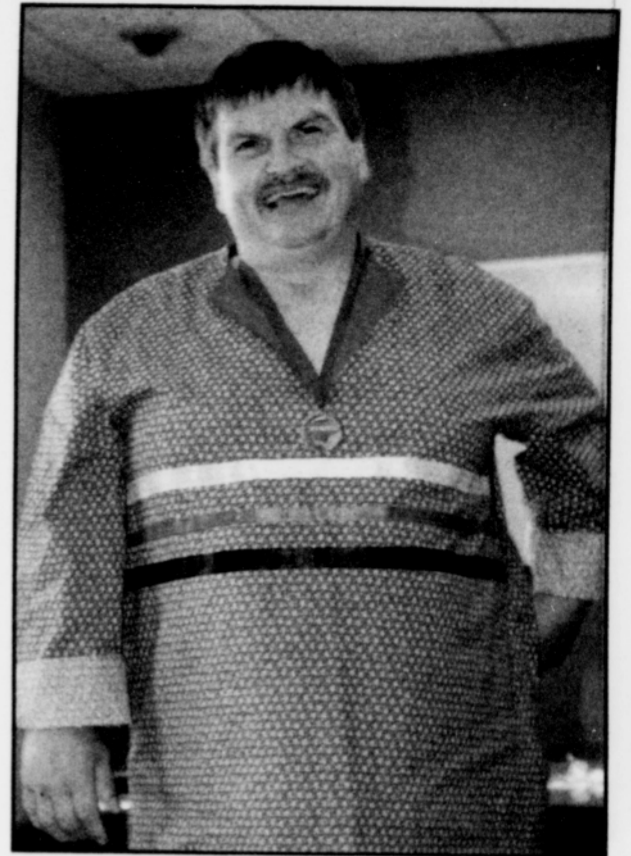
tilla, Yakima and Albuquerque. Holland describes Viles as "quite a leader in the Native community."

"I'm originally from Central Oregon and I moved to Portland to go to school," said Viles. "I graduated last Sunday (June 17) with my degree and now I'm working. I have a job, that's a good thing."

Azule, coordinator of Diversity and Multicultural Student Services - Student Affairs at PSU, and his wife, Luella, attended the Student Gathering. Luella Azule works for the North Portland Area Indian Health Board as the project coordinator of the Injury Prevention Program.



Jennifer Cook



Kevin Goodell

Ashley Taylor receives a Pendleton blanket from Nick Sixkiller, her student incentive award for graduating with a bachelor's degree.



Dean Azule also thanked the Siletz Tribal Council and the Siletz Tribal Charitable Contribution Fund, which donated \$1,500 to PSU for a graduation ceremony for its 27 American Indian students.

## First in family to earn degree

In addition to working full time, Jennifer Cook has "been amazing this year in college. She works full time and she maintains really high grades" at Portland Community College, said Holland.

"It's so good to be here and be back in school. I'm so appreciative," said Cook. "I'm transferring to Portland State. This summer term, I'll have my associate's - the first in my family to have a degree."

Kevin Goodell has had quite a ride since earning his GED in 2009.

"I just want to thank the Tribe. I wouldn't be able to do any of this without them. I went through a lot of challenges to be here in school right now. I'm 48 right now and I just got my GED in 2009 and decided as soon as I got it that, man, I can go to college now," he said. "So that's what I've been doing. I got a one-year certificate and then a two-year associate's of science and an associate's in general studies in the last two years. Oh, and a member of Phi Beta Kappa."

Sixkiller recounted the growth of the education program during his 16 years with the Tribe.

"For me personally in the area office, the education program has tripled. It gained a lot of momentum; our graduation rate is climbing. We have more students in our schools now, in junior colleges and major colleges around the state. We're really making progress ... in becoming educated American Indians," he said. "I have 18 students at the University of Oregon and when I first started there, I had two."

This year, Sixkiller said he has 12 graduates, six from UO and six in adult vocational training programs.

One of the UO graduates is Ashley Taylor, who received a bachelor's of science in general science, with emphases in chemistry, human anatomy, physiology and substance abuse and prevention.

"I would like to thank these two people (Sixkiller and Holland) up here greatly because a few years ago I told myself I was not going to be a science major anymore because I couldn't do it. And I remember crying and crying and saying I just wanted to be a social worker," said Taylor. "And Katy said no, you're going to be a dentist, that's what you're going to do. And then Nick writing recommendation letters in half an hour and sending them off to the school because I'm a procrastinator. I say thanks to these two for taking care of me."

## Pow-wow, con't from page 1

annual Nesika Illahee Pow-Wow. Many of the facets of indigenous America are represented at our annual event both in craft and food. We have a flavor sure to please every food connoisseur," said Lane. "There is something for everyone here."

A free shuttle will be available from various parking lots in Siletz to the pow-wow on Government Hill. Signs will be posted. Parking is extremely limited at the pow-wow grounds, which makes the shuttle the best way to get there.

This alcohol- and drug-free event is free. Listen carefully to the pow-wow announcer, who will tell you when you can and when you should not take photos.

The announcer also will explain the significance of the events taking place in the dance arena throughout the pow-wow.

## Pow-Wow Schedule

### Aug. 10

6 p.m. - Royalty Crowning  
7 p.m. - Grand Entry

### Aug. 11

10 a.m. - Parade  
1 p.m. and 7 p.m. - Grand Entry

### Aug. 12

Noon - Grand Entry