

Tribal Member Trains to Correct Children's Speech, Hearing Disorders

By: LaVonne Butler

I am a full-blooded Indian and a member of the Siletz Tribe and I am presently completing a public school internship as the final requirement for a bachelor's degree from the Department of Speech and Hearing Sciences.

Chief Plenty Coups, a noted leader of the Crow Tribe once said, "Education is your most powerful weapon. With an education you are the white man's equal: without education you are his victim." I have seen too many of our children become victims because services were not available to them, despite federal laws which should have protected them.

One day about four years ago while I was employed as a speech pathology aide at the Chemawa Indian School (the oldest Indian boarding school) in Salem, Oregon, a colleague handed me a flyer and said, "This is for you La Vonne. Go for it!" The flyer described the Native Americans in Communication Disorders Training Project (NACD) offered through the Department of Speech and Hearing Sciences at Washington State University. This project, funded by the U.S. Department of Education, trains Native Americans for careers as speech/language pathologists and audiologists, providing financial assistance in the form of tuition payments and monthly living stipend.

As I read the flyer, I thought I probably would not be selected for this program because high school had not been a good experience for me. But I knew, if the NACD program would take a chance in selecting me, I would not let them down. I wanted this opportunity more than anything else. After filling out the application, I called each month to inquire about openings and to let the project coordinator know I was still interested. Finally, the telephone call I had been waiting for came. I was chosen to be an NACD trainee. I have since learned how much work lies ahead to earn my professional credentials.

Studies indicate that communication disorders occur in the Native American population with five to fifteen times greater frequency than in the general U.S. population. This increased prevalence may result from the more frequent occurrence of chronic ear infections and associated fluctuations in hearing suffered by Native Americans, as well as their lack of access to services that prevent speech, language, and hearing disabilities. Unfortunately, only 144 of the over 67,000 speech/language pathologists and audiologists belonging to the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association are Native American. Of these certified, Native American professionals, only eight serve the five northwest states of Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington. Addressing the speech, language, and hearing service needs of Native Americans by Native Americans will be a great challenge. Clearly, the eight Native American students currently enrolled in the training program at WSU and the four Native American professionals, who already have been trained in the program, are beginning to impact this need.

As a student intern, I presently serve six rural schools in Whitman County, providing speech and language therapy to seventy-three students under the supervision of a certified speech language pathologist. My internship experience has confirmed my calling to this career.

Our Native American children walk in two worlds. I want to teach Native American children the importance of preserving the old traditions and balancing them with the ways of the American mainstream. As a pipe carrier (a person who offers spiritual support), completing my four-year pledge to the Sun Dance, I will do my part to maintain my cultural heritage. I know peace can be found in the balance between carrying on these traditions and serving as a speech/language pathologist.

In our native tradition, each person is equal and individual gifts must be used to aid the whole. Upon completion of my master's degree, I plan to use my gifts to teach our Native American children. I look forward to that day.

La Vonne Butler graduated from Corvallis High School in 1969. She is committed to working as an advocate for Native American children. "I was working as an aide and a lot of Indian children came to me. But as an advocate for them, I wasn't listened to because I wasn't educated. Now I will be listened to."

(La Vonne Butler, has recently completed requirements for a bachelor's degree from the Department of Speech and Hearing Sciences at Washington State University. LaVonne will be continuing her education next fall as a graduate student at Washington State University in Spokane. She will begin a 2-year program working toward a master's degree in Speech and Hearing Sciences.)



Ron Hudson with Grandmother, Maude Lane (left); Mother Gladys Bolton (right); and son, Anthony (front)

Congratulations to Ron Hudson on his graduation from George Fox College. We're proud of you....God Bless... Mom (Gladys Bolton), Donald, & Bill Hudson



Siletz Girl Selected as a Finalist for the "Miss Oregon National Pre-teen Pageant"

Miss Danielle Payne, age 12, daughter of Daniel & Pamela Payne of Siletz, has been selected as a finalist in the 1993 Miss Oregon National Pre-Teen Pageant to be held at the Majestic Theatre in Corvallis, on July 16th 17th & 18th. The Miss Oregon National Pre-Teen Pageant is for girls between 9 and 12 years of age and is the official state pageant for the Miss National Pre-Teen Pageant to be held in Florida, in November. Miss National Pre-Teen, now in its 13th year, is the only pre-teen pageant affiliated with America's Miss National Teen-Ager Scholarship Pageant now in its 22nd year. The winner of the pageant will receive an official crown, sash, trophy, long stem roses, business cards, a designer gown, \$500.00 savings bond, her transportation and full sponsorship fees to the National Pageant to compete with other state winners for the title of Miss National pre-Teen 1993, and many more exciting prizes. Contestants will be judged on academics, achievements, interview, poise appearance and personality. There is also an optional talent and sportswear modeling competition.

Miss National Pre-Teen has teamed up with "Just Say No" against drugs, and works very hard to promote this worthwhile program, with "Just Say No" awards on both state and national levels.

As a community, lets get together and give Danielle our support in her efforts to represent Siletz at the state pageant!

"The tragedy of life doesn't lie in not reaching your goal. The tragedy lies in having no goal to reach."

— Benjamin E. Mays, educator and civic leader