

Indian Village rises ahead of Round-Up

By BEN LONERGAN
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — As dawn broke Sunday, Sept. 12, over the Pendleton Round-Up Grounds, dozens of tribal members from across the Pacific Northwest descended on the Indian Village to begin assembling teepees.

For many, including 65-year-old Odie Minthorn, the Round-Up Indian Village has been a tradition that has stretched on for generations.

“My grandmother was here in 1910,” said Minthorn. “I’ve been doing this forever.”

Minthorn is an enrolled member of the Cayuse and Umatilla tribes and said his family has been participating in the village since the founding days of the Round-Up. As Minthorn helped tie off the top of the four pole frame that supports his teepee, he remarked at the mix of memories that come with returning to the Indian Village each year.

“I’m sad and I’m glad — my grandmother was right here,” he said as he gestured to a nearby spot of grass where his family once raised her teepee.

Minthorn said he is

happy to return and enjoys the memories that come with raising teepees with his family members, but always feels a twinge of sadness as he remembers those who are no longer with him. Even so, Minthorn said he feels it’s important to keep the knowledge and practice of assembling a teepee alive.

For 69-year-old Francine Delorme, an enrolled member of the Nez Perce tribe from Lapwai, Idaho, the importance of passing on her knowledge and reconnecting family is what brings her back to the Round-Up each year.

Delorme and her children and grandchildren raised five teepees Sunday morning, carefully taking the time to select their teepee poles and lash the tops.

“We used to bring our own teepee poles each year,” she said. “But it’s a lot of work to make them.”

Delorme said she and her late husband made 45 teepee poles several years ago and ended up leaving them at the Round-Up with the intent of making more. She said her husband would go out and cut down Lodgepole Pines near



Odie Minthorn, left, and Dusty Minthorn tie off the top of a teepee before raising it Sunday, Sept. 12, 2021, in the Pendleton Round-Up Indian Village.

Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

their home on the Nez Perce Reservation and she and her daughters would spend several days preparing them for use.

“You have to take off all the bark and smooth out all the knots,” she said. “It takes about two days just to peel one — and then you have to let it dry.”

As Delorme gets older she said she’s trying to pass the process of assembling the teepees onto her daughters and their children.

“I’m trying to let my girls do more,” she said. “They’ve been putting up teepees since they were 10, 11, 12, and my youngest is 42 now.”

Delorme looks forward

to spending the week in the Indian Village and getting to see family from across the region, as well as the rodeo.

Before John Adams started participating in the Indian Village 50 years ago he spent his Pendleton Round-Ups on the other side of the grandstand, clinging to the tops of livestock in search

of prize money for saddle-bronc, bull riding and the Indian Relay Race.

“I’ve been around horses all my life, I jockeyed and rodeoed,” he said. “Eventually I got hurt and quit rodeoin’.”

Now the 80-year-old Yakama tribal member joins his family in the Indian Village each year and enjoys the Pendleton Round-Up from a seat slightly further from the action. Adams supervised as his family put together five teepees in the village Sunday morning, a place they will call home for the next week.

“I was trying to help a little while ago and they were all hollering at me,” he said.

Adams said he and his family packed up the car and drove Saturday from the Yakima Valley before arriving in Pendleton around 11 that evening. He said they spent the night in the Pendleton Convention Center parking lot awaiting the 6 a.m. load-in time for the Indian Village.

“At 6 they come and they open the gate,” he said. “It’s a big rush to unload so you can get set up for the week.”



Lights illuminate the crowd as country music singer Billy Currington performs Saturday, Sept. 11, 2021, at the Pendleton Round-Up Kick-Off Concert at the Happy Canyon Arena in Pendleton.

Photos by Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

Round-Up kicks off with annual concert



Country music singer Billy Currington holds his microphone to the crowd while performing Saturday, Sept. 11, 2021, during the Pendleton Round-Up Kick-Off Concert at the Happy Canyon Arena in Pendleton.

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