

# Thousands attend Phoenix education conference



An Oklahoma drum and gourd dancers entertained at the NIEA conference powwow. Many attended the powwow, some just to watch, but most to dance.

by Donna Behrend

For some, it may have been the first time to be airborne, while others were seasoned travelers aboard the planes that carry thousands of passengers cross country daily. Whatever the case, a delegation numbering 14, left the early, winter-like weather in Warm Springs and headed for balmy Phoenix, Arizona for the ninth annual National Indian Education Association (NIEA) conference November 7 through 10. Nearly 3,000 educators, parents students and tribal leaders were expected to attend.

Nine Warm Springs community members were nominated by Tribal Council through an ad hoc committee of the tribal education committee for national annual awards given by NIEA. Lilly Heath, Andrew David and Caroline Tohet were nominated for Senior Citizen awards; Effie Culpus, Lloyd Smith, Sr. and Jody Calica were nominated for Educator awards and Pam Keo, currently living in Syracuse, New York was nominated for a Student award. Andrew David, 83, was selected by NIEA as Senior Citizen of the Year and was presented a plaque at a banquet on the second day of the conference.

Conference participants, who came from across the country and Alaska, were offered 132 different workshops ranging

from Impact aid, Where Is It, Where is it going? and Parenting and Early Education for Indian Children to What Every Teacher Teaching Indian Children Should Know and the Power of a Positive Self Image. It was nearly impossible for delegates to attend each of the workshops but nearly all were offered more than once. There were also workshops offered to students at different times that ranged from improving self-esteem and financial aid to career choices.

In his remarks at the opening session of the conference, NIEA president John Tippeconnic III explained that NIEA has a 15-member board of directors, five of whom are students. Since NIEA began in 1970, said Tippeconnic, "it has made significant contributions to Indian education."

Key note speaker Merton McCluskey, currently Director of Indian Education Programs of the Great Falls School System in Montana stated that the conference theme "Indian Policies and Culture for '80s—Vision for the 80s" "may cause confusion. What occurred in the first half of the 80s may not compare to what will happen in the second half." McCluskey continued saying that "there is no room for politics" in Indian education. "If people are really concerned, they should let politics go by the wayside. The children come first."

McCluskey commented that education is being offered by the current administration. "Cutbacks will drastically affect the programs. There is little or no commitment to education of the young. In the 1970 we were finally given the opportunity to form Indian education programs. I'm not sure this will continue."

McCluskey also stated that "very little addresses the cultural problems Indian children have. If the trend continues, I suppose we will have a confused cadre of school personnel. Children will be more illequipped for the future. There's a continuing-ponging in the Indian educational community."

He also stated that even though "there is a general feeling of helplessness, there's probably much we can do. We can make a difference at the polls. Make sure there's no waste, make do, and prioritize, making sure that education is at the top."

McCluskey concluded his remarks, saying, "share in the education process—work together." Howard Rainer, known for his inspirational presentations to young people across the country, presented workshops to students and adults dealing with improving self-esteem. He suggested that "there is a power in the mind—power to think, to do and to create." He encouraged the adults to use their

minds to their fullest extent. "Believe in yourself and in what you can be. Dare to be different.

"Also, act like you're somebody. If you do, people will treat you that way." And if people don't show what they have to offer, others will not know that they have anything to offer.

Rainer was also concerned about the high dropout rate among Indian students. "If 60 percent to 65 percent of our junior high students are dropping out, we're losing our future."

The annual awards banquet was very well attended. About 1,000 people at \$25 a head crowded into a room for the prime rib dinner and awards presentations. Tickets were at a premium and hard to find. It was at this banquet that Andrew David received his award from NIEA president John Tippeconnic. Andrew was one of many to be nominated for this honor.

Some Warm Springs residents were a bit reluctant to leave the 70 plus degrees weather in Phoenix, anticipating snow and a treacherous trip over Mt. Hood to home. The anxiety was unnecessary.

Photos by Donna Behrend



Miss Warm Springs Lena Ike met up with an Alaskan friend at the powwow.



Lyda Scott, currently a student at Scottsdale Community College, manned a booth at the exhibition hall during the NIEA conference.



Third through eighth graders from Tucospos Boarding School near Four Corners, Arizona, performed a traditional dance at the exhibition hall.



A worship dance performed by these young people was enjoyed by those attending the powwow.

## Thousands of miles from home... Keo living in Syracuse, N.Y.

by Donna Behrend

What's a nice girl like Pam Keo doing 3,000 miles away from home in New York State? She's living, working and attending school in Syracuse—a city two-thirds the size of Portland.

Some people may shake their heads, unable to comprehend the desire to live in a "concrete jungle." Others who have traveled to New York know that once out of the major cities, there are lush, beautiful forests and rolling hills, much like Oregon.

Pam is the 22-year-old daughter and one of five children of Levi and Crystal Keo who live on the northend of the reservation.

Pam graduated from Maupin Union High School in 1980. In January of that year, Pam was an AFS student and lived in Hastings, New Zealand for a year. In the fall of 1981, Pam packed up bag and baggage plus books and moved to Syracuse to attend Syracuse University.

Pam attended SU for three years studying policies studies, which is a combination of political science and research methods. This course of study is recommended by school counselors for pre-law students. Pam felt "burned out" and that she "needed a break" from her heavy class load, which ranged from 15 to 18 hours per term and from working part-time for defense contracts, a federal program, 20 to 25 hours per week.

Pam is enrolled at Central City Business Institute and is working towards an accounting business administration degree. She also works full time for a law firm doing word processing. Working everyday and attending school three nights a week, five hours per night make for a

very busy schedule.

Pam and a roommate live in a two bedroom apartment that's close to a bus line. Pam travels 30 minutes one-way to school and work.

Pam was recently nominated by the Tribes for the National Indian Education Association student of the year award and attended the NIEA conference in Phoenix, Arizona. At that meeting, students formed a National Indian Student Association and Pam was named to the board of directors. Board meetings will be conducted on the telephone as board members are scattered across the United

States. Each board member has been assigned to check into schools with high Indian concentrations.

Pam enjoyed her time in Phoenix. "It was great" to see everyone, she said. Most of the 15 or so Warm Springs delegates didn't recognize Pam as her looks have changed significantly. Her long hair has been replaced with a chic short coif and her dress is that of a city dweller, somewhat different than Western dress. However, that is all that has changed. Her shy, friendly manner is still present as are her quick smile and sparkling eyes.



Pam Keo, nominated as Student of the Year, is living and attending school in Syracuse, New York.