

Parents' group struggles with serious education concerns

A quality education is the basis of a quality future. With a well-rounded, comprehensive education, comes success, employment and, more importantly, high self-esteem. When barriers prevent attainment of a good education, a cycle begins to occur. Whether those barriers begin at home, at school or with a student's personal relationships, hurdles created are often insurmountable.

Identifying those obstacles is one thing. Preventing them, or even eliminating them, is another. Parents concerned about basic education needs have been meeting since last spring, following an altercation between four high school girls, to discuss and develop a strategy which will hopefully smooth the path toward success. The tribal education branch and the education committee have also been working on developing such a strategy. The task is not an easy one to deal with—frustration and disappointment are around most corners. Most frustrating is the fact that in the 1981 Tribal Comprehensive Plan, identical problems were identified—community members are beginning to ask "why" and "what are we going to do?"

Marie Calica, speaking on behalf of the parents' group, said earlier this summer that home base meetings and other gatherings were conducted at which statements of parents and students were gathered. From those statements came two questionnaires—one for adults and one for students. The surveys were distributed among tribal member students and employees and, because of lack of time, among some community members. About 50 percent of the surveys were returned. Though complete survey results were not available, the ultimate goal was for a tribal school on the reservation. "It would be

a school of choice. A quality school. We could take responsibility for the type of education, discipline and teachers ourselves. We would offer a creative education to excite our kids."

"We can't change the past or what has happened, but we can improve the situation and ensure that the same things won't happen again," Calica added. Low test results at the elementary school level, a high dropout rate and other factors all contribute to a paternalistic society which ultimately will cost the Tribes more than they can afford. The graduating class of 1994 started with 138 kids in kindergarten, Calica said. "Twenty of them graduated. What happened to the rest? Are they in jail? Did they die? Did they move? Are they on General Assistance?"

"We have a generation with no skills" which will result in a generation that will not be sufficiently prepared to care for the reservation, its natural resources or the future.

The parents' group has also attended a school board meeting at which proposed changes in personnel and curriculum were suggested. Calica said she felt the proposal fell on deaf ears. "We got no response" from board members. "We're not sure the board is responding or listening. The only member to give feedback was Jim Manion," Calica said, expressing her frustration at the situation. Manion was elected to the board just last spring.

Calica explained the group's progress and concerns to Tribal Council August 29. In a letter presented to the Council, the group says, "Our main focus is to encourage all parents, youth and community members to express their concerns and ideas in ways

that will help improve the present educational services to secure productive educational outcomes for our tribal youth. It is not our intent to compete with or detract from those activities and authorities of the Education Branch or the committees. The school system has played us off against one another far too often and a sad price is paid through our children. The public school is only responsible for up to thirteen years of our children's lives, when the schools fail, the Tribes may inherit a responsibility that may take several generations to restore.

"We believe there are many other parents and adults that are very frustrated and unwilling to continue accepting the high dropout rate of our tribal youth; the lack of employable skills and the indifferent attitude within the educational system. Too many of our students are being forced out of school as behavioral problems or pressured to leave to find a better place to learn. We must have a more productive plan and program to meet our youth's educational needs to become a healthy community and secure a future for them that will benefit all Indian people. We are not satisfied with the services as they exist. We would like to identify more productive alternatives that will benefit and fulfill the educational needs of our youth...."

"...As parents and/or grandparents we want to be active partners in ensuring the quality of education available to our young people. Past leaders looked out for our interests, we need to do as much for our younger and future generations in the best way we can working as employees, representatives, families and citizens in a strong partnership."

Calica encouraged Council members to

attend school board meetings, to let "our presence be known". She also suggested, after talking with Dr. Bud Beamer of Madras, that a community task force be formed to work on improving relationships between Warm Springs and Madras. "Stereotypes exist out of ignorance."

Council Chairman Ray Calica, speaking on the proposal of a tribal school, said Council has asked that the Education department investigate what will be needed to build a school here that would meet state requirements. "Can we establish as separate district? How do we recruit staff and what is the availability of teachers? Where and with which teams would Warm Springs teams compete? Would the state accredit and recognize a Warm Springs school? This information has not been received....What we must realize is that a school won't happen overnight. We'll miss a few generations, some won't graduate. But we must prepare ourselves for the future."

Adding, Calica suggested it was unknown

at what level the Tribe would be at the mercy of the Oregon education department. "Will they set up barriers?How long will it take us? A long time, but short as compared" to the past. "The bottom line—be patient. Get what is necessary to benefit our people down the road."

Because the parents' group feels a lack of accountability on part of the District, they have proposed that two staff people be hired to work at the Jr. and Sr. High schools as liaisons. Too many times, they say, students who thought they were about to graduate found out too late they lacked the required credits. Liaisons would be responsible for informing the students and their parents if they are "on-track" for graduation. They would also work toward easing tensions that may exist between students.

Unfortunately, the problems facing students today are not new. Hopefully, with community action, help to overcome obstacles will be available to interested families.

Changes proposed

The proposed personnel and curriculum changes are:

1. Need more staff to work with Warm Springs youth and parents to ensure school contact regarding all student needs.

1.A Native American liaison in Madras Jr. High school, at Buff and at the High School.

1.B Teacher assistants, also at the Jr. High, Buff and Warm Springs Elementary.

1.C Licensed tutors at the high school level as compared to peer tutors.

1.D Native American staff person to coordinate and communicate educational needs and work with the Tribe and District 509-J.

2. Curriculum

2.A To include a class teaching the Warm Springs tribal organization, history, government, cultural values and beliefs, etc.

2.B Three tribal Indian languages to be offered at Elementary, Buff and Jr. and Sr. High Schools.

2.C Life Skills, personal health, self-esteem, gang awareness, relationships.

2.D Career awareness and preparation.

3. To enable strengthening the community and cultural awareness of teachers and other District educators cultural in-service to be provided throughout the school year.

3.A Quarterly workshops, school assemblies and in-service training.

How do we ensure our young will be productive?

To the Community,

This letter is really long overdue considering the seriousness of the situation. But, rather than go into the entire circumstances, we will just elaborate on the finer points.

Last school year, four Madras High School students, three from Warm Springs and one from Madras, were involved in an ongoing confrontation. We were told by our children that this problem had been going on for at least two months and that the principal and the vice-principal were aware of this and were supposed to be working on the problem and finding a solution. We later found out the solution was to suspend the Warm Springs students.

The mother and daughter from Madras contacted the Madras City Police. The police went to their home and a complaint was filed against the Warm Springs girls. A city police officer went to the school and gave each Warm Springs student involved in the incident a citation for menacing and harassment and talked with one of the girls. It is against the 509-J school policy rules and procedures #961 to allow any law enforcement official to come into the school and talk with a student without a parent's knowledge.

When we tried to find out the facts from the school principal, we were told that he didn't have first-hand knowledge of the situation but that he felt the vice-principal had everything taken care of. In reality, the principal was in his office, not in the interview, when the police officer interrogated one of the girls. This is strictly against school policy, according to 3.3 of the rules and procedures #961, which states the "school authority shall remain present with the student during the interview until a parent or legal guardian is present, and/or throughout the interview, when requested or when a parent or legal guardian cannot or chooses not to attend." Superintendent Phil Riley told us that the principal was acting on our behalf.

To make a long story short, nothing has been done to correct the situation. The problems were still there on the last days of school. How many times have parents and children from Warm Springs gone through this? Have any changes been made to correct similar situations such as this since we, as adults, have been out of school? Talking with other community members, things like this have been going on since the 40s...Did anyone read the apology in the Spilyay from Rusty Freeman, a Madras music teacher?

Some kids have the stamina to be able to handle the situations they're put in. Some kids alienate themselves from their Native American classmates in order to be part of the so-called "elite group" in Madras. This comment was mentioned by other Indian students and the Jr. Council, which are concerned about what the Indian students must endure. Let's stop this type of self-destruction we are putting our children, our future generation, through. Give our kids a fair chance to succeed. Let's get together and start doing something that should have been done when many of you readers were still in school.

Our children's education is not improving and is hindered by the lack of fair and equal education. As a concerned community, what are we going to do to correct the situation so our young people can be our future leaders and obtain the education that will ensure they will be successful and able to contribute positively to the needs of their Native people and all of society.

Sharlayne Garcia, Sissy Smith, Debbie Bermen

More than 50 head to college

The following is a listing of college-bound students for the 1994-1995 fall term.

Rebecca Aguilar, Jana Buck, Cynthia Caldera, Dirlle Calica, Marie Calica, Heather Crow, Tamera Coffee, Jacob Coochise, Nikki Courtney, Teri Courtney, Doreen Danzuka, Laurie Danzuka, Toni Florendo, Angelina Frutos, Elbrosia Gurmo, Leona Ike, Louise Jackson, Vesta Johnson, Josh Kalama, Jothan Lawrence, Alyssa Macy, Robert Macy, Jr., Scheldon

Minnick, Sunmiet Minnick, Jolene Pineda, David Poitras, Tonia Polk, Frank Reese, Jr., Mary Ross, Urbana Ross, William Sahme, Dean Seyler, Louis Scott, Tonya Selam, Bodie Shaw, Amanda Smith, Denise Smith, June Smith, Mona Smith, Rachelle Smith, Richard Smith, Ryan Smith, Sr., Rebecca Soliz, Marceline Stacona, Carol Stevens, Alexandria Tapia, Travis Wells, Lois Wenzel, Dennis White, III, Jason Williams, Owens Yahtin and Nicole Yaw-Clemens.

Program ensures students' ability, commitment for higher education

The eight-week Summer Bridge was conducted June 21 through August 12 through the Central Oregon Community College Warm Springs office. Seventeen college-bound students worked hard to earn 10 credit hours in college math, English and reading. Computer instruction was also included to teach students wordprocessing. Mastering this skill is vital to being able to function effectively in today's college setting. It also had an immediate pay-off by being put to use to complete the Summer Bridge's homework assignments.

In its third year, Summer Bridge helps students bridge the gap between reservation life and college life. Students must receive a passing grade to be eligible for tribal funding for college tuition and related costs. Not only does the class immerse students in the reality of study and homework, it also includes managing jobs and family. Classes were held Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 12

noon and then participants went on to their regular jobs for at least four hours more.

At the end of the eight-week session, 11 students were successful in meeting the challenge and completing the coursework. Three students received 4.0 grade point average (straight A). The cumulative GPA for the entire group was 3.0 (B) This outstanding achievement speaks volumes about the students' dedication and commitment.

Completing the class with 4.0s were Alice Sampson, Angelina Frutos and Tamera Coffee. Others who completed the class were Edgar Boise, Frank Brunoe, Nikki Courtney, Doreen Danzuka, Elbrosia Gurmo, Jolene Pineda, Denise Smith and Jason Williams.

During the final week of the program, students were honored with a picnic at Jurassic Park with basketball and volleyball for entertainment. After all the festivities, final exams provided a memorable conclusion to Summer Bridge 1994, especially the "timely" interruption imposed by the fire alarms.

Fall Community Education classes offered

The Fall term for Community Education is right around the corner. Registration starts the week of September 12 and continues through September 15. If you are truly interested in the classes listed below, be sure to register as early as you can during that week. If the minimum number of students have not registered, then the class gets canceled, leaving many people disappointed, so register EARLY.

Conversational Spanish—
Build a fundamental working knowledge of Spanish. Improve basic and job-related communication. Ideally suited for beginners. Excellent preparation for a credit class. Wednesdays from 6:30 to 9 p.m. from September 21 to November 9. Instructor is Scott McLean. Class cost is \$40 and will be held at the Warm Springs Education Center.

Western Swing—
Another of the "Western" style dance forms that are currently so popular and which attracted so many participants to a class here last year. Learn Western Swing from basic footwork to advanced moves. Bring a friend and join the swing! Class held Thursdays at the Community Center from 7 to 9 p.m. for four weeks beginning October 6. Mary Raines is the instructor. Cost: \$19.60

Mask Making—
Express yourself. Design and build your own mask beginning with a molded impression of your face or another figure. Finished pieces make excellent gifts or wall decorations. Supply list available at registration. Class, taught by award-winning artist Holly Anna Spino, will be held Tuesdays from 7 to 9 p.m. at the Warm Springs Education Center. Four-week class

begins September 27 and ends October 25. Cost: \$26.

Typing on the Computer—
Having trouble finding the appropriate key on the keyboard? Master the keyboard by touch. For beginners as well as those wishing to brush up on their skills. Class held Tuesdays from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. from September 27 to November 22. Marilyn Hart is instructing at the Warm Springs Education Center. Cost: \$36.50.

Intro to Windows—
A complete introduction to Windows on IBM compatibles. Learn the basics of customizing WordPerfect utilizing Windows and special features. Includes dialogue boxes, button bars and file manager. Greg Smith, instructor, will hold the class on Thursdays from 6:30 to 9 p.m. at the Warm Springs Education Center. Class will begin September 29 and continue to October 27. Cost: \$33.88

Intro to Lotus—
This beginner and refresher course on basic spreadsheets is ideal for both family and business budgets. Learn commands, formulas, macros and graphics. Bring a 3 1/2" disk. Instructing will be Mike Lofting. Class will be held on Mondays from 6:30 to 9 p.m. at the Warm Springs Education Center. Class begins October 3 and ends October 24. Cost: \$32.

Lotus 2.4 Version—
The next level above Intro to Lotus. This pair of classes is offered in sequence so that you can progress from beginner to advanced user in one eight-week period. Learn advanced Lotus features including data base, macros, and wysiwyg. Prior Lotus required. Mike Lofting is also instructing this class on Mondays from 6:30 to 9 p.m. at the Warm

Springs Education Center. Begins November 7 and continues to November 28. Cost: \$32.

GED/ABE
The new term will start September 20. Registration will be held September 20 and 22, 27 and 29. Classes are held Tuesday and Thursday from 9 a.m. to 12 noon. Enrollment is limited and classes have been filling quickly.

Students need to realize that class is only three hours a day, two days a week and if they do not attend regularly, the position will be given to someone who really wants to study for their GED.

Second writing class scheduled

Human Resources and Central Oregon Community College are co-sponsoring a "Writing Improvement" class beginning September 12. Held Mondays and Wednesdays from 1:30 to 3:00 p.m. at the Education Center, the five-week class will conclude October 19.

The focus of the class is on word choices, grammar, punctuation, spelling, appropriate sentence structure—all those elements that lead to writing mastery. Language is changing with the times, but not lessening in importance. This is your chance to get on board. Registration deadline is Thursday, September 8. Call 553-1428. Pre-registration is required.