

Students: Doing well at school in Maupin

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So, while the Moody family's crossing the school district boundary isn't set in stone, it looks like a pretty good bet.

The arrangement requires a commitment on their part. "We have to take the kids to the bus stop, which is 11 miles away, and we have to pick our kids up every night," says Captain. But for him, that's OK.

"We get them out the door later [than if they'd gone to Madras]. They don't get on the bus until 7:30. In the spring and fall terms, they're home by four o'clock. If they went to Madras, they wouldn't be home till five," he says.

"We pick up an hour and a half of time with our kids almost every day."

That's an important thing to Captain and Winnona Moody. But it didn't mean their worries were over: "I think one of the things we were a little tentative about is we didn't know how they would be received. Maupin at one time had a stereotypical reputation, and we didn't know how well they would be treated just because they were Indians," Captain says.

But come to find out, that was quite the opposite of what really happened.

He goes on, "The kids were welcomed, and the families there treated us really well. They treated the kids well. They have volunteered to pick up the kids if we're not here. Teachers have said the kids could stay with them or we can give them a ride home — all those kinds of neighborly things. We weren't accustomed to that."

All parties agree. There was a little bit of teasing when Antone and Huston first entered school in Maupin, but it was more because they were the new



Rica Torres is among the Simnasho area students who attends school in Maupin.

Bing Bingham/Spilyay

kids on the block. Now, Captain admits, the shoe is on the other foot:

"Now I see my own boy doing it when the new kids come in. 'We got a new kid and blah, blah,' and I tell him, 'Remember that feeling. Remember how that felt? Well, you think about that when you act up.'"

Appreciating cultural differences

The change in schools seems to be working well for all parties. The native kids are playing their part in Maupin's reputation for scholastic excellence.

Grades are up, and attendance is up.

Tom Rinearson uses a simple measuring stick to tell if the organization is running smoothly. First he asks if students are improving academically. Then he takes to the halls to see if people are smiling.

"I'm not in a situation where I'm in day to day contact with kids, but as I'm walking around, by and large, the Native American kids all have smiles on their faces," he says.

Nevertheless, according to Rinearson, there has been a change in

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Tom Rinearson
School superintendent

the school culture since the young Natives enrolled: "I don't find the things I read about in The Oregonian. In all

fairness, I haven't interacted with the whole tribe, but by and large they are very respectful of other people, other people's points of view and other people's cultures. That may have been the biggest impact they've had on our school. As a result, they've gotten a high level of respect for their culture in return."

Importance of parent support

It seems as though things are working well for the young Natives in school at Maupin. But it's more than just the school reaching for excellence and providing support, as well as the kids being cooperative and participating in their own education. There are the parents also.

"I don't think it's unique to any culture," says Rinearson. "I think the more parents take a genuine interest in their kids, and are willing to be involved in those kid's lives, the better those kids are going to do. Captain and Winnona have been very supportive of their kids and very supportive of other kids in the school system. Winnona especially has been supportive in ways that don't draw attention, and that support has made a huge difference."

Parental support is important. Captain and Winnona Moody are probably thinking about that when they're tumbling the kids into the car on an icy winter morning to take them to the bus stop.

But there's nothing they can do about young Antone's discomfort during that early morning ride.

He'll just have to hang in there — that is, until he's old enough to drive his own car to school.

Naming: nearly 200 people gather for ceremony

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Merle Holmes has for 12 years been part of the Medicine Society, a group in Grand Ronde that continues to honor these traditions. The group also leads and participates in funerals, first fishing and hunting successes and other traditional milestones.

"I know it was very important for him to bring it here," said We-la-lik.

"I attend so much stuff at Warm Springs and at Yakama," said the Elder Holmes. "At Warm Springs, if they have a young man or woman going away to war, they have a ceremony. When they come back, they have a ceremony. We don't have them here... but I wanted to see if the people here were interested enough. I thought I'd bring an aspect here to see if people were interested."

By one count, 160-180 people were interested. They filled the Community Center cafeteria to overflowing for this event. It started before noon on the last Saturday in February, and continued until nearly midnight.

As the ceremony got underway, Tribal Elder Laverne Hostler congratulated Holmes and said, "I hope you've started something."

"I like to see this sort of stuff because it's traditional and there isn't much of it going on anymore," said Mel Holmes, nephew to Elder Merle Holmes and cousin to We-La-Lik. "It's a good learning experience for me like for a lot of Grand Ronde members. When you have a community involved," he added, "there's a higher probability that others will learn."

Elders from Warm Springs, Umatilla and Yakama tribes performed songs and told stories in the beginning. A cafeteria-style meal followed with traditional meats and fishes, berries, roots, salads and fruits. Adults stood in long lines that snaked around the tables and chairs while young children ran around with their own traditions of celebration.

Following the meal, the tables were put away and chairs consigned to an outside circle while many set up for the presentation of gifts.

"Watch how things are laid out on a trail," said Taaw-lee-winch.

Blankets and quilts were laid out on the floor first. They covered the entire area where all the gifts eventually were placed. Many place settings went down



Brent Merrill/Courtesy of Smoke Signals

The naming ceremony included a giveaway at the community center.

next, followed by large salad-style bowls that eventually were filled with home-canned salmon, berries, and cereals. Cans of coffee accompanied each place setting, then salmon jerky, followed by towels and wash cloths, socks, straw mats, skins, shawls, bottled water, then fruit.

"My dear relatives," said Taaw-lee-winch. "Witness the beginning of a name-giving."

The process continued with many speaking about the family, the ceremony and the future. It involved loading We-la-lik with blankets — they were spread out over his outstretched arms — so that others of the family's choosing would come up to him, honor his newly given name, and receive a gift from the family.

Taaw-lee-winch gave the instructions: first to say the new name: We-la-lik, and then say your own name; take a gift from We-la-lik (a blanket, for example), and then give a gift. Sometimes, in these modern days when many of the craft skills are lost, friends and family give money instead, according to Taaw-lee-winch.

"It's kind of cheating," he said, but allowed in these modern times.

The traditional met the modern in other ways.

Yakama Elder Julian Pinkham whose grandchildren are Grand Ronde Tribal members, told a touching Indian family story with a Polish joke punch line. The home-smoked jerky and canned salmon sat alongside of cans of Folgers coffee.

But for Elder Merle Holmes, the

"In the old old times when things were really hard, when they had those giveaways, they gave away everything they had. That was how important this was."

Merle Holmes

naming was an addition to modern life, not a contest between the two. "Most of us today have nicknames and this has no effect on our payroll signature or anything else. It's something above and beyond."

We-la-lik, 31, who works in Bellevue, Washington as a Provider Relations Representative for PacifiCare, the insurance company, called the community support, "Overwhelming. It's a great day, today."

We-la-lik has taken part in Medicine Society events at the Warm Springs Reservation, so this was the third or fourth time he had seen such an event.

"I think I'll still walk the same after it's over, but there is some spiritual fulfillment in doing this," he said. "I feel like I've taken part in something mean-

Next deadline for the Spilyay is noon on Friday, April 9.

ingful."

His brother, David, an actor and set builder in Los Angeles, was unable to attend because he was involved in a play set to open the day after the naming, but if he wanted a naming ceremony, too, said his father, "We'd put together a giveaway for him."

The giveaway is the key to all this, according to Merle. "In the old old times when things were really hard, when they had those giveaways, they gave away everything they had. That was how important this was."

Among the giveaways, the Holmeses saved the best for the tribe's oldest, Elder Nora Kimsey, 95.

The Circle of Life Pendleton blanket had a message on a sewed in piece that read: "In honor of all Tribal Elders, the wisdomkeepers who are charged with handing down teachings and spiritual direction so the children better understand their responsibility to the universe and the creator."

Another "highest honor" blanket, this one produced in a limited edition, went to Wasco Band Chief Nelson Wallulatam.

For memories, none topped the moment when We-la-lik — his arms outstretched like a scarecrow, the blan-

kets being piled on — sank under the weight.

"It got pretty warm in there," he said later.

And for tenderness, there was a beautiful moment when the naming was over. Merle Holmes' good heart is none too healthy, and he had been working tirelessly on this project for three months.

"I think he can finally relax," said We-la-lik.

After a whole afternoon spent on the naming part of the ceremony, as much time and effort went into a night of Medicine dances. Without cameras or reporters, the evening was left to the sacred.

(This article and the photograph were provided to the Spilyay Tymoo courtesy of the Smoke Signals newspaper of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde.)

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