

Education Begins With A Head Start

By Tracy Olson

Ask anyone about the future of the Grand Ronde Tribe and they will likely say the most important element is the Tribe's children. If this is true, the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde is at a distinct advantage because tribal enrollment has doubled in the last eight years. In 1984 the Tribe's enrollment was 1,495 and today it is 2,926. There are many adults who have petitioned the enrollment committee to become tribal members, but there are also many people having children who are eligible for tribal status. The result is a large population of toddlers and pre-schoolers.

This is why the new Head Start program is so important. For the past several years, the Tribe has successfully maintained its higher education program designed to help tribal members finance their college or vocational training. Now, the Tribe is helping to fund an education program for children before they reach school age.

Head Start is primarily funded by YCAP (Yamhill Community Action Program) and operated from their main offices in McMinnville, Oregon.

The Grand Ronde Tribe has agreed to provide classroom space and utilities.

Currently, there are nineteen enrolled children in the Head Start program, twelve tribal members and seven non-Indians. However, most of the children reside in the Grand Ronde area. A child's eligibility into the program depends on several things. First is the family income. Head Start programs are designed to serve the needs of children from low-income families. Second, foster care children or children with special learning needs are given priority.

Head Start teacher Angela Bedortha and Assistant teacher Mary Cook plan the activities and events for the children on a daily basis. They sing educational songs, have developmental work time, music time, and story time. They

are also given breakfast and lunch.

The children are also learning certain routines that prepare them for kindergarten and grade school. After only a few weeks, the children are learning to hang their coats up, wash their hand after playing outside, and each child is given a toothbrush which they use every day. Mostly, the children are taught the importance of getting along with others while doing educational activities.

One aspect of Head Start that is largely emphasized is confidentiality. "Confidentiality is very important," said Angela Bedortha. "Everything a parent tells us is kept between teachers and YCAP employees. Children won't

have their needs met if their parents are afraid to confide in me, and I can't plan for those needs if I'm not aware."

The Head Start classes are being held at the Tribal Community Center for now, but they plan to move to their own schoolhouse sometime after Christmas. "Our ultimate goal is to be operating on our own without the

support of YCAP," said Angela, "but that won't happen for a while."

Head start is also going to introduce more aspects of Native American culture to the classroom. For example, they are going to read "Black Bear, Brown Bear" as translated into Chinook jargon by Eula Petite. There is also a desire to have regalia in the classroom in order to explain traditional dress of the Indians. If there are any parents who have regalia from when their children were little and would like to donate it to the Head Start class, it would be appreciated.

By providing a Head Start program in Grand Ronde, the Tribe is helping to instill a positive attitude toward learning for the tribal youth.

If you are interested in enrolling your child into the Head Start program, there is a waiting list. However, information is available by contacting Angela Bedortha, Mary Cook, or June Olson at the tribal offices.

The Grand Ronde Tribal population has doubled during the last eight years.

Cultural Class Update



CeCe Kneeland helps prepare the hides for tanning class.

There were 19 participants in the cradleboard class, and everyone that attended did a great job. Education wants to thank Shawn Hostler, John Mercier, Camille VanVleet, Tracy Hubbell, Ed Larsen, and Mike Larsen for their assistance in setting up the tables and plug-ins.

There were 16 adults and 13 children who participated in the hide tanning class. Karen Lord discovered a new use for pizza cutters, which make excellent hide scrapers. Everyone worked very hard and had a good time. I would like to thank Lonnie Leno who donated and recruited several hides for the class, Chips Tom, Jimmy Brandon, and especially Ed Larsen, who allowed the Education Department to keep a hide donation can at his store and encouraged many hunters to donate hides to this project.

Due to scheduling problems, the December 5 Leather Crafts class is rescheduled for Friday, December 11 at 6:00 P.M. at the Community Center. The December 12 class remains as scheduled. No leather will be supplied, and those who participated in the hide tanning class provided their own. If you would like to bring your own leather and participate in the class, you are welcome to attend. Hope to see you there! Please contact me in the education department if you have a question. The schedule for classes in upcoming months is below:

DECEMBER 5, 12: Leather Crafts

Prior to this class, participants will need to decide what they want to make. The program can then determine what we will be able to provide for the participant.

JANUARY 9, 12: Oral Traditions

This class will cover storytelling, as well as viewing videos and listening to tribal Elders tell stories.

FEBRUARY 6, 20: Gambling Hand Game

Just bring yourself and be willing to sing or be tolerant of those who try.

MARCH 20, 27: Foods

This class will focus on identifying and gathering edible plants in the "wild".

APRIL 10, 24: Baskets

This will be a presentation of baskets and looking at materials in the making of baskets. If there is interest, we may have a basket making class later on.

MAY 15, 29: Traditional Medicines

This class will be both a presentation and gathering of plants, and their preparation.

JUNE 12, 19: Ceremonies/Celebration Protocol



Head Start students eat lunch in the morning and prepare for the day's activities.