

OR. COLL.
E
78
.06
566
December
15, 2000
STA
QUA
LLA
JYA
ER

SMOKE SIGNALS



A Publication of the Grand Ronde Tribe

www.grandronde.org

December 15, 2000

Author Sherman Alexie Talks Humor, Indians and Politics in Restoration Performance

By Brent Merrill

Smoke Signals got a chance to talk with Sherman Alexie — the hottest commodity in Indian Country right now fresh off of his success with the movie Smoke Signals.

Alexie made time for us right before his performance at the Tribe's Spirit Mountain Casino. Alexie's performance in Grand Ronde was in celebration of the Tribe's Restoration Day.

Alexie, a Spokane and Cour d'Alene Indian, currently lives in Seattle with his wife. Together they have shunned the Hollywood lifestyle that beckons to them from Los Angeles.

The interview was filled with laughter. But, the interview was also serious at times and views on some important subjects were shared. Alexie's opinions are his own and you should remember he is a comedian. Alexie may make you laugh and he might even make you mad, but what he should do is make you think.

What has your schedule been like? What have you been doing? Obviously you are a busy guy now days.

It's actually been pretty quite this fall. I purposely did nothing. This is my first event since May.

Was it just time to take some time off?

Yeah, for the first time in years. I took some time off and played a lot of basketball. So it was a pretty quite fall.

One of the things I noticed when I was at the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) conference recently is that things have changed so much in Indian Country. In the past someone would give a presentation and they would never be interrupted, but now you have different cell phones going off and people have their laptop computers out and there are all these well-dressed Indian people talking on the phone. What do you think about the changes in Indian Country between the old and the new?

It's money. It's money and with money comes access to privilege. With the influx of money into Tribes you are creating a class system within Tribes and within the Indian world. So when you are at NCAI you are talking about the upper class Indians and upper class non-Indians is getting closer and closer. So I think that is what you are seeing is privilege asserting itself.

So do you think it is all about the gaming dollars or what?

Oh yeah. We had no money before that. Nobody did. And it is not necessarily individual Indians that are getting rich, but Tribes are getting rich. Leadership of Tribes is enjoying the power associated with that money.

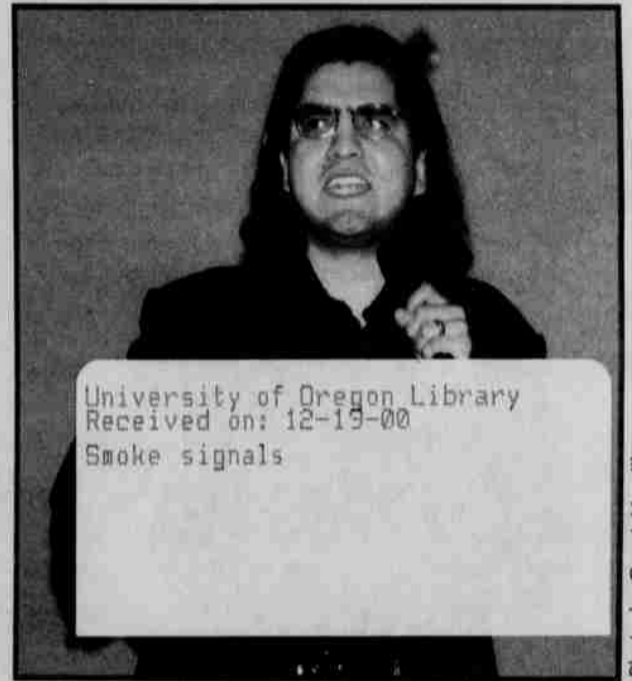


Photo by Brent Merrill

OPINIONATED — Spokane and Cour d'Alene Tribal member Sherman Alexie performed his stand-up comedy routine at the Tribe's Spirit Mountain Casino on Monday, November 20. Alexie's performance was in celebration of the Tribe's Restoration Day on November 22. The author of books like "Reservation Blues" and "Tonto and the Lone Ranger Fistfight in Heaven" talked about Winona LaDuke's vice presidential bid, the Makah's right to hunt whales and the fact that local high schools still use Indian mascots for their sports teams in the 21st century.

continued on pages 6-7

Interview Highlights From the Year...

Smoke Signals 2000

■ Interviews were insightful, humorous, controversial and thought provoking.

By Brent Merrill

From Tribal Elders to Tribal leaders, politicians, celebrities, hall of famers and even a kid who saved some people's lives on a burning bus, the year 2000 was interesting, thought provoking and some times controversial.

Smoke Signals started the year 2000 with a celebrity coup and talked with Hollywood heavyweight Jay Leno between his two shows at the Tribe's Spirit Mountain Casino. We talked with Tribal Elders like Joe "Sonny" Mercier, Marce Norwest, Orville Leno, Merle Holmes, Emma Sell and Leonard Vivette. We talked with the Tribe's first attorney who re-visited Grand Ronde after a 20-year absence. We even spoke to Indian leaders like Oren Lyons, Kevin Gover and our own Kathryn Harrison. Last, but not least, was the funny man of Indian Country who is single handedly putting a new face on Natives with his pen — Sherman Alexie. We hope you enjoy this look at the year in review.



Kathryn Harrison, Don Wharton and Jackie Whisler.

Photo by Kim Mueller

Tribe's First Attorney Revisits Grand Ronde, sees many Changes

When Attorney Donald Wharton first heard of the Grand Ronde Tribe in the late 1970s, there was no Tribe.

Federal recognition of the Grand Ronde Tribe didn't come until years after Wharton first met with Tribal members Dean Mercier, Marvin Kimsey, Margaret Provost, Merle Holmes, Merle Leno, Jackie Whisler, Eula Petite and Kathryn Harrison among others.

Wharton remembers meeting at the Grand Ronde Elementary School because the only thing the Tribe had left was a little green building at the cemetery. He remembers watching a hat passed around the room so coffee could be purchased for the next meeting.

Interview with Don Wharton:

Wharton: Your restoration was in 1983 and I visited in 1978. It was quite dramatic to see the difference between the very mod-

continued on pages 8-9



Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde
Community of Oregon
9615 Grand Ronde Road
Grand Ronde, Oregon 97347
Address Service Requested

PRESORTED
FIRST-CLASS MAIL
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
SALEM, OR
PERMIT NO. 178

Serials Dept. - Knight Library
1299 UNIVERSITY OF OREGON
EUGENE OR 97403-1205

The Tribal Council and Staff
would like to extend our
warmest wishes to you
& your family for your
friendship and goodwill
during the past year.

