

Grass Dancer Takes Time To Share His Talents

■ Tribal youth Chad Peters represents at Sheridan's Chapman Middle School.

By Willie Mercier

The vast gymnasium of Chapman Middle School in Sheridan is empty when Grand Ronde Tribal member Chad Peters, dressed in Native regalia, sets up his senior project.

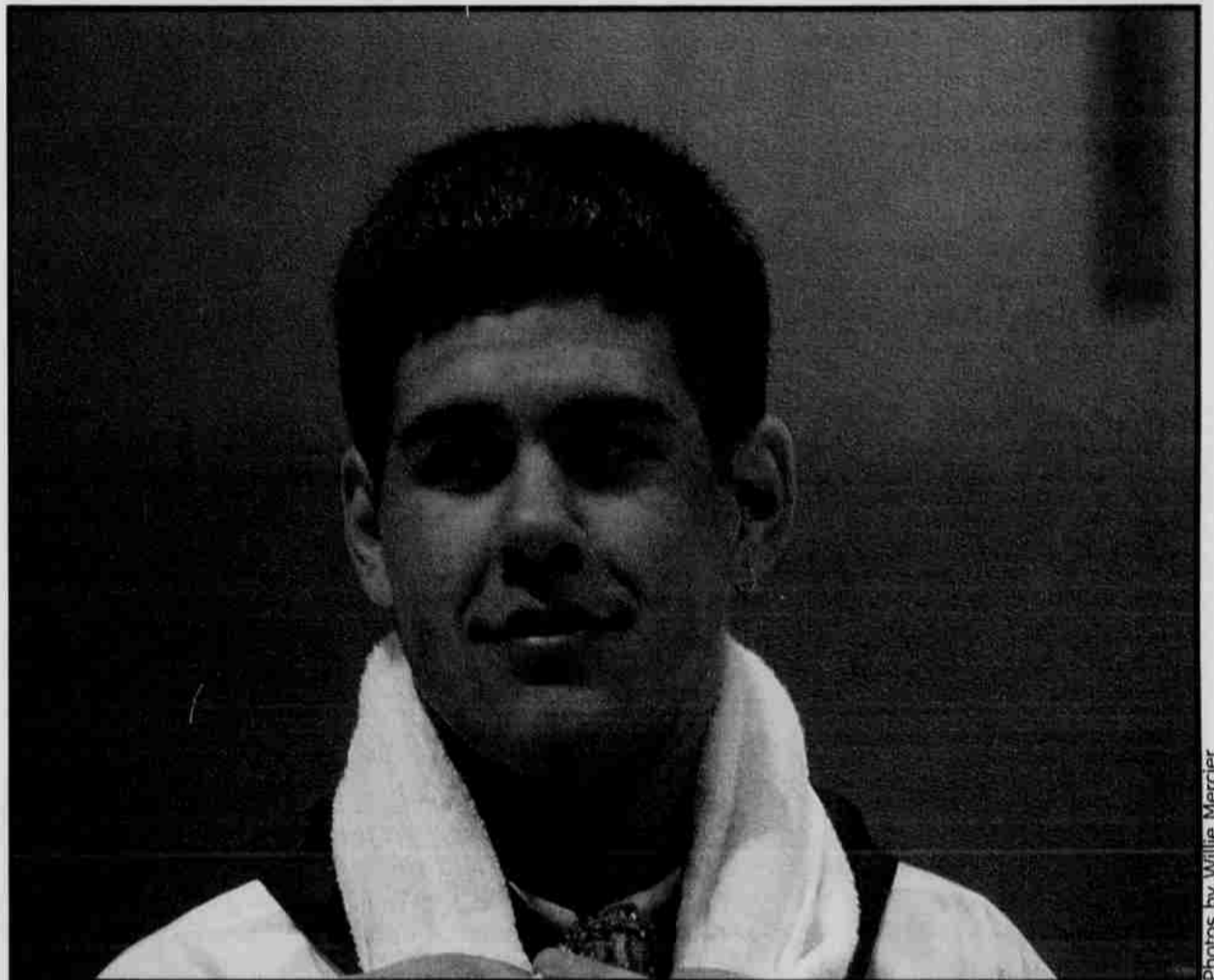
Peters, a senior at Sheridan High School, is a grass dancer who decided to share this part of his life with the young people that attend Chapman.

"I see that most people in these schools and the school districts don't know much about Indian education and pow-wows and pow-wow etiquette, so I thought that it would be a good way to teach them," said Peters.

It was not so long ago that Peters was sitting in this same gymnasium watching assemblies himself, now he is the presenter.

The sound of Chapman Middle School's young people could be heard as they approached the gymnasium doors on Friday, May 10. The students were gathered for Peters' presentation.

Peters started by introducing his father,



Photos by Willie Mercier

Like Father, Like Son — Tribal member Chad Peters learned to dance from his dad Deitrich Peters and recently showed his skills at Sheridan's Chapman Middle School. Peters' presentation to the students was part of his senior project at Sheridan High School. Years before, Peters sat in the same gymnasium watching others present their senior projects, wondering when it would be his turn.

Deitrich, and his friend, Franklin Pratt, and then himself. After giving a little background regarding their regalia, the different dances and the meaning of the music, the sound of beating drums resonated throughout the gym like an approaching thunderstorm, and then the dancing began.

Peters explained to the audience that traditionally, a grass dancer's purpose was to flatten the grass for a dance arena and to rid the ground of any rodents, snakes or anything else that might be hiding.

Chad's feet touch the gymnasium floor in synch with the drumbeat and it is obvious that he has the student's attention. The kid's, who are notorious for short attention spans, sit quietly and attentively captivated by Chad's movements.

"I think it went awesome, they (the middle



school students) actually responded more than the high school kids," said Peters when asked how he thought his presentation went.

Peters has been dancing for several years, his father was his inspiration and is who Peters credits for getting him interested. You might have seen Chad dance if you attended the Tribe's Annual Pow-wow last year; he danced in the grass dancer competition.

"I didn't fare too well," said Peters. "I don't dance for the money - I dance because I want too."

Will he compete next year?

"Yeah and I'm going to do better, but it doesn't matter to me if I win or lose." ■



Educational — Students at Peters' presentation learned about his regalia and what the grass dance means and what its origins are.