

Songbirds Fly To America, Visit Grand Ronde

■ "The Sparrows" from the Czech Republic entertain local crowd, participate in a cultural exchange.

By Peta Tinda

Native American heritage, history and culture were shared with visitors from the far off land of the Czech Republic, when the Grand Ronde Tribal Royalty, Veterans Color Guard and the Tribal Council hosted the choir group, the Sparrows, at the Tribal Community Center on Sunday, June 2.

The Sparrows - from the town of Jablonec in the northwest Czech Republic - were here as part of an exchange program with the Portland Symphonic Choir. Ranging in age from 9 to 17, the Sparrows sing in the classic choral style and often sing traditional Czech songs.

"This was such a wonderful experience for them," said one of the group's chaperones Teresa Kerres, a member of the Portland Symphonic Choir.

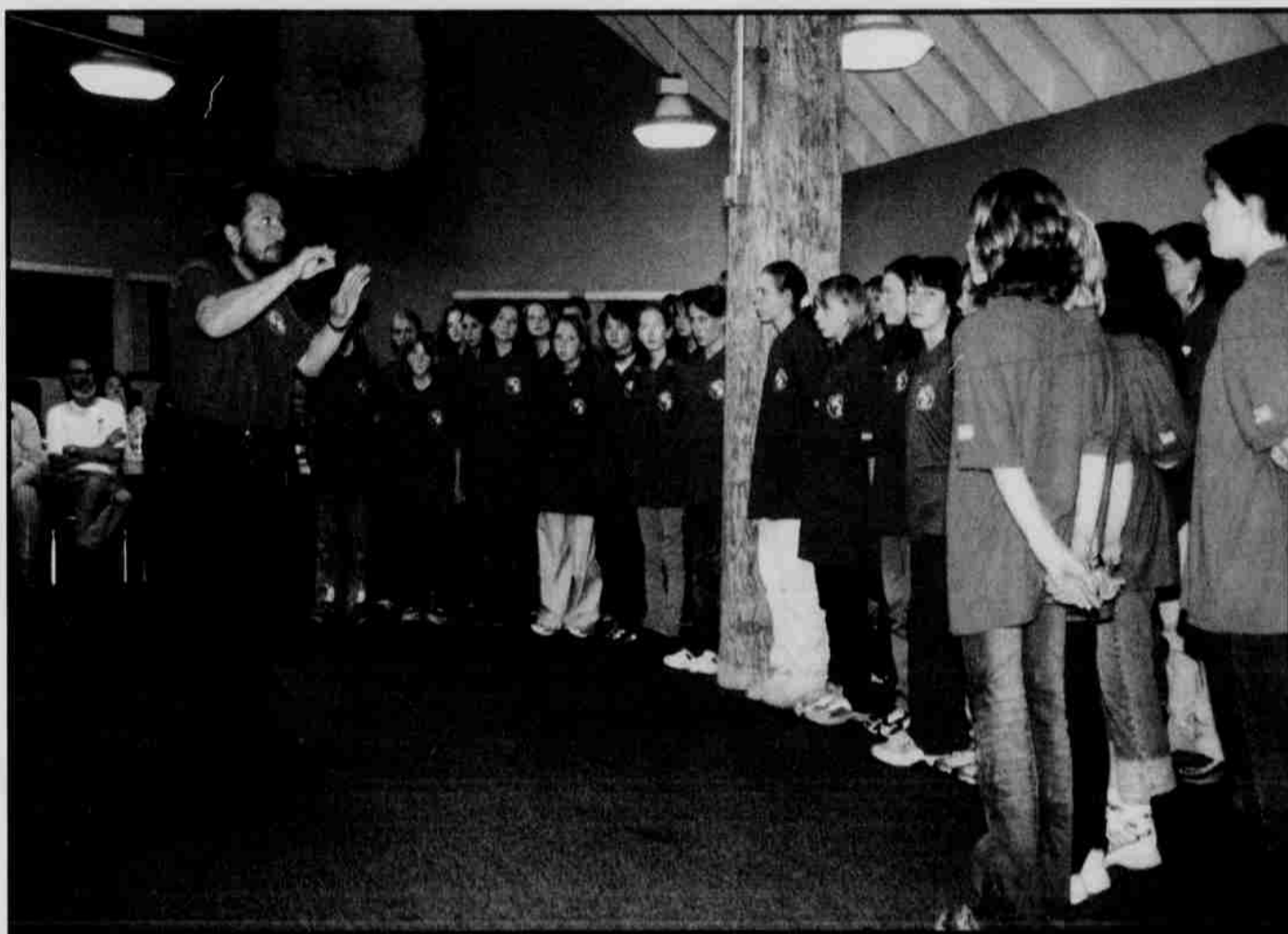
"People from other countries have heard about Native Americans, but they've never seen them," said Kerres. "Or if they have it's just the movie image of Natives. They don't know the history of what happened to Native Americans. This was a really great chance for them to see your beautiful culture and they had a really fun time."

The Sparrows and their chaperones arrived at the Community Center in Grand Ronde at 7 p.m. They were welcomed by Tribal Chair Cheryl Kennedy and introduced to the Tribal Council, Royalty and Veterans.

Then they were treated to a meal of Indian tacos.

"It's nice to be able to share our culture with others, especially people from other countries," said Julie Little of the Royalty Committee. "And it was also good for our girls to learn about the culture of others."

After the meal, Tribal Elder and former Tribal Chair Kathryn Harrison spoke about the history of the Confederated Tribes and the years of hardship and struggle it took to get the Tribe where it is today.



Photos by Peta Tinda

Voices — A choir group from the Czech Republic called "The Sparrows" visited Grand Ronde on Sunday, June 2. The group of young people entertained with their singing talents and then watched as Tribal members and Tribal Royalty danced for them in return.

The Grand Ronde Veterans' Color Guard led the grand entry, followed by the Tribal Royalty court, as well as many community members who came out and danced for the event.

Tribal member Deitrich Peters, dressed in his finest regalia, was the announcer for the evening. He explained about his traditional dance outfit to the students and the significance of each piece of regalia.

He also told about other dancer's regalia, like how traditionally grass dancers had the important job of stamping down the grass before celebrations, and why jingle dress dancers have jingles.

An inter-Tribal dance was held, giving the Sparrows a chance to get up and dance with the community members. Soon after a friendship dance was put on, and everyone danced and shook hands with each other.

"It was a total success," said



Fancy — Tribal member Deitrich Peters entertained the visitors with his dancing and his explanation of the reasons for the different dances — like the grass dance.



Visitors — These teenage girls were among the 57 young people who made the trip to America from the Czech Republic. Counting the chaperones, the group totaled about 80 people. The visitors were treated to a dinner of Indian Tacos and a dessert of ice cream at the Tribe's Community Center.

Kerres. "They had a really fun time dancing."

The person that was the biggest help was Julie Little, of the Royalty Committee. She put together and amazing program and the kids really appreciated it."

When the dancing was over, the Sparrows performed a concert for the gathered community members.

"They're actually exceptional musicians," said Kerres of the Sparrows. "They practice every day. It's said that American kids are raised to play sports well, Czech kids are

raised to be musicians. So the kids are really advanced for their age. Also a lot of Czechs are quite poor and most of the kids have never been out of the country, or even their hometown. So this was a fabulous opportunity."

Kerres said she would like to thank the Tribal Council for donating a night's stay at the Spirit Mountain Lodge to the kids.

"That was very nice," said Kerres. "The whole thing was wonderful and we are so very gracious." ■