

Annual Royalty Pagent Is A Showcase For Talent

■ Tribal youth will travel this year representing Grand Ronde.



Photo by Brent Merrill



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Royalty—Newly elected Tribal Royalty Princesses Leah Brisbois (left) and Kayla Kneeland (right) were chosen to represent the Grand Ronde Tribe for the 2004-2005 year. After the selection, the families and friends of the Royalty (far left) joined the girls in an honor dance around the pow-wow arena.

By Peta Tinda

Nine hopeful girls got up before the crowd and were judged on their dancing, regalia and their public speaking ability.

The girls were competing for the honor of representing the Grand Ronde Tribes as part of the Tribal Royalty, but only three were chosen to wear the crown.

Kayla Kneeland was elected to wear the Senior Miss Grand Ronde crown, Leah Brisbois to wear the Jr. Miss crown and Melissa Biery was chosen for Little Miss Grand Ronde.

The girls now begin a year-long commitment that will require immense patience and dedication, often involving long hours on the road away from home representing the Tribe as official ambassadors of goodwill. Their reward will be an inimitable experience that will teach them about life, respect, their heritage and will be reflected in the smiles and applause of the thousands of people they will meet in the coming year.

The royalty elections were held on Friday evening during the Annual Grand Ronde contest pow-wow. The judges were looking for certain characteristics.

Mychal Leno, a royalty parent and former Miss Grand Ronde from 1988-89, said: "Some of the things that make a good princess are confidence, commitment and the abil-

ity to hold one's head high."

"It's not easy to do," said Tribal

know about their Tribal history and be able to recognize their ancestry.

"We want someone who is going to know their ancestors," said Leno.

The royalty court is an important way for the girls to learn about their culture and heritage so that when they grow up they will have a connection with their traditions.

"We also want them to know we're here for them and it's important for other people to see that."

Since the Royalty is expected to represent the Tribe and is often the only face that most people see, it is essen-

tial for the girls to handle public speaking and be able to speak to large crowds in clear, concise, voice.

"The public speaking aspect is huge," said Leno. "It's a skill they learn here that will stay with them for the rest of their lives."

Royalty parents will tell you that the experience of being chosen to represent the Tribe has been beneficial for their children.

It makes their girls more articulate, increases their self-esteem and makes them more confident in their

own abilities.

"It has been really good for her," said parent Tracy Biery. Her daughter Melissa had competed before but this was her first year to win. "She's more confident in school, her speaking ability is amazing and I credit that to being in royalty," said Biery.

"The other girls give each other confidence too, they get to know each other and have become good friends; it makes it less scary because they have their friends their, encouraging them. It has been really, really good for her." ■



Photo by Marty George

2004-2005 Jr. Miss Grand Ronde Leah Brisbois

Elder and Royalty Committee member Donna Casey. "You have to be real dedicated. I think it's something for them to look back on, some thing they can tell they're kids about. The girls learn a lot of respect for other people, especially Elders and that's real important," said Casey.

The judges were looking for a girl that was self-assured and carried herself with dignity.

"They have to move with a sense of pride," said Leno.

It is also important for the girl to



Photo by Marty George

Little Miss Grand Ronde
Melissa Biery



Photo by Brent Merrill

Grand Ronde Tribal Council members — (l to r) Reyn Leno, Valorie Sheker-Robertson, Cheryle Kennedy, Jack Giffen, Jr. and Jan D. Reibach.



Photo by Brent Merrill

Honored—Gros Ventre Tribal member Treston Joseph, age 7, was featured on the September 1, 2003, cover of *Smoke Signals*. Upon his return to the Grand Ronde Pow-wow in 2004, he was presented with a framed copy of his *Smoke Signals* cover shot by Editor Brent Merrill, who took the original photograph.