

## Community Support Is Strong For Youth Pow-wow

■ First-ever event draws crowd to Willamina High School.

By Peta Tinda

The First Annual Native Youth Leadership (NYL) Pow-wow was held at the Willamina High School gym on Saturday, December 11.

"We haven't really come up with a name for the pow-wow," said junior Eric Sabin, the de facto leader of the group. "We're still working on that."

The pow-wow was coordinated by Tribal youth in the NYL program, along with the Tribal Education Department. The Tribal Youth Social Services Prevention Program helped fund the celebration.

The NYL kids decided earlier this year that they wanted to hold a pow-wow, both as a test of their leadership skills and simply because they thought it would be a good idea.

"We were just shooting around ideas; there's not much stuff going on in the winter, so the kids decided they wanted to have a pow-wow," said Youth Education Cultural Specialist Travis Mercier. "They wanted to do something for the community," he added.

Mercier said that he thought that turnout was good for a first-time pow-wow and that even though there weren't a lot of people, everybody I talked to was there to support those kids," said Mercier.

With concessions and other fundraisers, the kids raised enough money to put a down payment on the rental price of the gym, provided they help clean up afterward.

"We really wanted to put on pow-wow," said Sabin. "We had to plan for it a lot. There are so many steps, but



**Healthy** — Siletz Tribal member Illena Blacketer, 5, eats an apple during the first-ever Native Youth Leadership Pow-wow. "They wanted to do something for the community," said Travis Mercier, Youth Education Specialist, who was responsible for the event.

all those youth leadership conferences paid off," he said.

"We also put it on for the kids we know," continued Sabin.

"It's good because the little kids watch us being respectful, but also having fun. And that's what I want to do. Be a youth leader."

Tribal member Chris Bailey, who helped organize the event, was initially reticent, saying "I'm the Barry Bonds of youth education. I don't talk to reporters."

But when asked about the youth who put on the pow-wow, he was much chattier.

"I'll talk about my kids forever," said Bailey. "We have great kids. We have kids who we can count on, are always willing to participate, do the work and are always willing to step up."

About 50 die-hard pow-wow fans watched from the bleachers or perused the vendors, while Nick Sixkiller emceed with his usual mix of jokes and good-natured humor.

Photos by Peta Tinda

"It's good for these kids to be putting on this pow-wow," said Bobby Mercier, a singer with Eagle Beak drum group. "It's hard for us because the Portland pow-wow was tonight, but it should be pretty good."

There were five drum groups at the pow-wow and the Grand Ronde Color Guard was there to bring in and post the colors.

An extraordinary event was the Apache Crown dancers from Chemawa Indian School, who put on an elaborately choreographed dance routine that lasted over an hour.

The kids made sure everyone who came to the pow-wow was fed with sack lunches they made themselves.

Alicia Selwin, a NYL member, said that she and her classmates spent the better part of the last four months preparing for the pow-wow.

"It was difficult making sure everything was done right, making sure everybody knew where they were supposed to be," Selwin said.

"But it makes us feel good because we did it and we're part of it."

Selwin thanked Travis Mercier, saying "we really appreciate all of the work he did." Selwin also praised the Tribal Education Department, saying, "They did a really excellent job."

Mercier said he thinks that the pow-wow will grow "because we did take care of people. The kids went around and thanked every single person who came," he said.

"And everybody there was there totally out of support. It was awesome."



**Leading Off** — Siletz Royalty leads the Youth Pow-wow's Grand Entry followed by Grand Ronde Tribal member Deitrich Peters.