

Elders' Honor Day 2005 In Grand Ronde



Photos by Ron Korten

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Tribal member Elaine LaBonte, Coordinator of the Tribal Tourism Department. Bingo was big in the afternoon. Children from the Tribal HeadStart program and the K-5 program each performed in a very musical way for the group.

The day also provided an opportunity for *Smoke Signals* summer Interns Jack Ham and Spencer Olson, along with the Governance

Center's Front Desk Intern, Leah Brisbois, all Tribal members, to cut their journalistic teeth on interviews at the event.

Tribal Elder Vicki Tom Lawrence told Brisbois, "This is my first time being here and it's also my father's birthday as well, so we wanted to come and be with him."

Umatilla Elder Lewis Carter told Ham, "I like to meet some of the old friends I've seen in the past years. Visit. See if they're still alive. Mourn if they gone. I also enjoyed



The Future — Tribal Elder Leonard Vivette arrives at Elder Honor Day with his daughter, Tribal Elder Leonette Galligher, at left. Members of the HeadStart Philharmonic, above, entertained the Elders with songs in their traditional language.

seeing the Veterans Memorial after it was completed."

"I'm impressed with how the Tribal members go out of their ways to give to other Tribes," said Rusty Hobbs. "I wish the rest of the nation would do the same."

The day did not present giant sales opportunities, but there were many raffles and giveaways. Tribal member Dana Ainam had a table inside the gym at the back where last year's pow-wow t-shirts were going for five bucks each. In the hall outside of the gym, Tribal Elder Charlotte Gray and friend Jeannie Cameron sold "Renuzit" dolls (able to store replaceable Renuzit air fresheners) and Angel dolls.

When *Smoke Signals* stopped by, the dolls were getting a good look-

see by Suquamish Elder Mary Napoleon.

In attendance were members of the following Tribes: Hopi (2), Klamath (1), Warm Springs (8), Yakama (5), Swinomish (8), Suquamish (21), Coos, Lower Umpqua, Siuslaw (25), Siletz (25), Umatilla (22), Cayuse (7) and Grand Ronde (86), according to Elders Committee Chair Louise Coulson.

"I think it went very well," said Coulson, who led the effort for the first time as Committee Chair. "It's just a lot of fun. It's very tiring but it's fun. I can tell you that the Elders this year from our Tribe were wonderful. We asked for donations for gifts. They responded. It was overwhelming. We (also) got gifts from the casino and from Tribal Council. That was really great."

Tribal Elder Tom LaChance Returns From A Church Mission To Russia

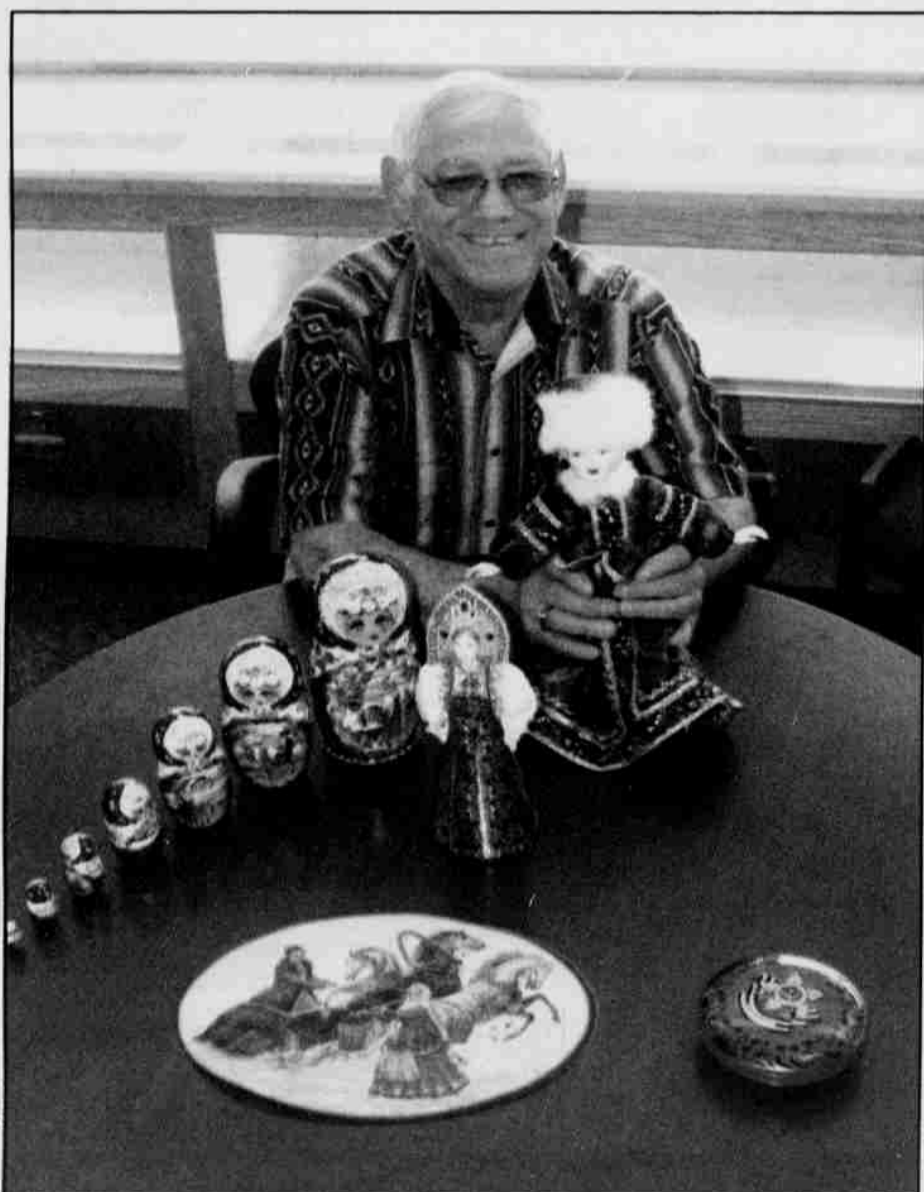


Photo by Ron Korten

Visionary — Tribal Elder Tom LaChance displays some of the arts and crafts that he brought back from Russia. With a group from his church, he helped fit and distribute more than 400 pairs of glasses.

Along with three other members of the Dayton Christian Church, Tribal Elder Tom LaChance recently returned from a mission that provided glasses to Russian peasants. The group spent more than two weeks in late June and early July in a succession of small towns about 600 miles northeast of Moscow.

LaChance was told that he was the first Native American to come to Grace Church in Kirevo, Russia, he said during the Elders' Honor Day events. They gave a picture of life in Russia — a homey picture of ice skaters on a frozen pond — to give to the Tribe. He is planning now how to frame the oval picture before making the presentation.

Overall, the group visited three churches and the villages of Novovjatsk, Kumyenj, Kirevo and Yuria before heading to the city of Kirov where the group shopped for souvenirs.

During the visits to the small villages, the Dayton group held clinics in which they put the appropriate lenses into eyeglasses for residents of the villages.

"We were fitting glasses to the people that could not see," he said.

"They were very poor," he said. "The houses were like they were built in 1940s. Tilting. They were made of wood. They only had cold water and outdoor toilets. They had to heat their water. The only source of heat is wood and that's how they get their hot water."

He also said that their attitudes toward American people were very

good. "They will do anything for you. They just seem to take life in general as it goes. Live day by day. They're so poor they can't afford cars. The majority walk. Some take a bus, and every now and then you'll see a taxi."

"The first church we went to," said LaChance, "were non-believers. They were reluctant to come to the church but did to get their eyes checked. Those we fitted glasses, were really amazed, really happy that they could see again. Then they wanted to know how much to pay for the glasses. We told them that they were free. We came to find out after that the non-believers were going to church.

"One lady at Grace Church, she hadn't been able to see for years, when she got the glasses where she could read, I can't describe, she got down on her knees thanking us that she could see. And she hadn't for years. She was so thankful."

All told, the group fitted more than 400 pairs of glasses.

Back in Moscow, the group saw the New Moscow Circus, the Kremlin and Red Square.

"It was really weird being in Red Square," said LaChance. "I could see up there where back in the 30s and 40s where Stalin and Krushchev would stand up on the balcony way above and wave when military went by."

It was all pretty far up north. How far? "It started getting dark around 11:30 p.m.," said LaChance. "And it starting getting light again around 3:30 a.m."