

the leaders had gone to lunch.

"I think what I'm seeing is tons of ability and talent ready for action."

He said that parents often hold kids back. "They are being passive. They're not committed to their kids' education. They're just plain waiting, and I ask, for what?"

"Thirty years ago," he said, "we were still under the umbrella of the BIA. We are still under the impression we have to wait to be told how to do it and when to do it. But today, we're erasing all of that."

"The only challenge that I see with these kids is they have to see it to believe it. The only way they can make this (project) happen is through (their own efforts)."

"The Indian spirit has always been there," said Rainer in the interview. "We now have to unwrap it, unveil it. That spirit represents power, potential and personal involvement."

"If I can't get these kids to be involved, why be here? They're already lectured to death."

The idea is to "stand up, be counted and make a contribution."

"I don't see these kids as 'at risk,'" he said. "The only thing that I see is potential and possibility. All I need to do is afford them the opportunity to see it themselves."

Results from Rainer's work is usually a long time in coming, he said. "The best successes will be evaluated five to ten years from now."

Jillene Joseph (Gros Ventre), Director of the Native Wellness Institute in Portland is one example. She was a speaker at the conference, and also led an Indian Child Welfare conference recently covered by *Smoke Signals* in a story called, "Raising Children With Stars and Apples," (2/1/06 issue). She attended a Rainer conference years ago.

"Everyone wants immediate results," said Rainer. "But how long have we had negative behavior? It takes time, reorganizing the thought process."

"There is no magic. It requires people that really are committed."

"You cannot lecture anymore. You have to get them involved."

A few students made their way back into the gym.

"Now, we're going to put them to the test," said Rainer. He called them over and asked them about the impact that the morning session had had on their lives.

"It made me feel proud to be an Indian," said Morning Joy Wilson (Pit River).

"It made me realize that we need to stand up more for our own people to let them know that we're here and going to make change," said Glenna Donahue (Kurok).

Rainer said that the American Indian Movement had helped leaders like Wilma Mankiller (Cherokee) succeed, and helped move the Bureau of Indian Affairs to make changes that Indians demanded.

"The American Indian Movement was an opportunity to voice our anger and our discontent," he said. "People joined AIM with the hope that it would make a difference."

Today, he said, "We need a new movement, a Native Pride movement where everybody's on the same page."

"If that movement became a reality, we would be intimidating because we would have so many people using their abilities and talents everywhere."

In addition to workshops on team building and leadership, the conference offered a dance and a three on three basketball tournament.

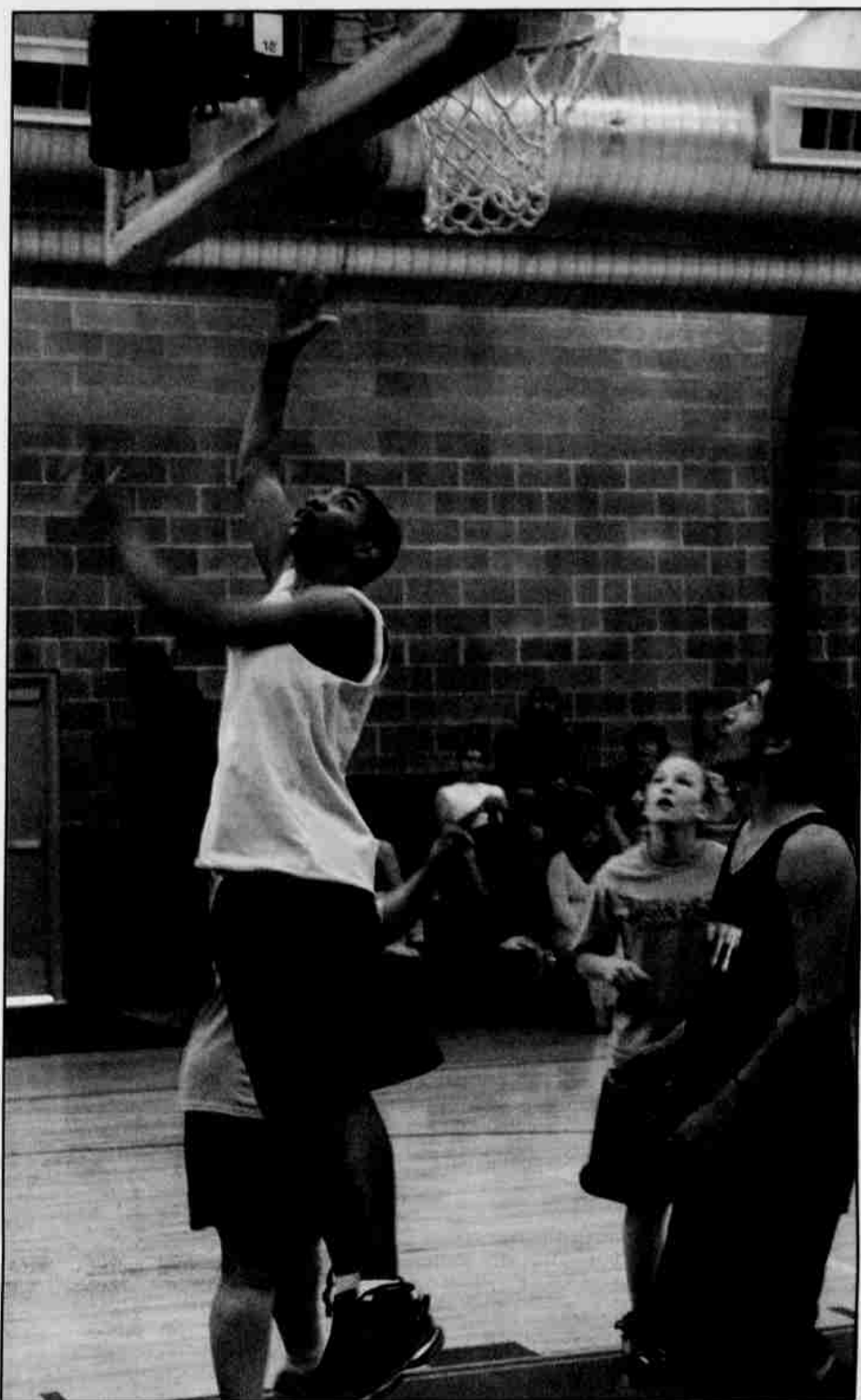
"This is the third year," said Heimbürg, "and it had a greater impact on the individual youth than we had in the past. It had a quality that we didn't attain in the past."

Joey Holmes' group, for example, took center stage at one point with instructions to stretch.

"My group did finger stretches," he said.

And how were his fingers after the conference?

"Good," he said. ■



Playing Time — Tribal member Michael Hostler goes up for an easy bucket at the 3-on-3 basketball tournament held as part of the 2006 Youth Leadership Conference on Saturday, April 29. The All-Stars from Siletz went on to win the tournament.



Group Setting — Howard Rainer, right, challenges (l to r) Glenna Donahue (Kurok), Newmie Wilson (Pit River), Deandra Wright (Klamath), Morning Joy Wilson (Pit River) to describe what his morning session meant to each one, personally.