

Tribe Hosts Indian Child Welfare Workers

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from front page

develop at their own pace, and that everyone, in general, is responsible to some degree for every child's parenting.

She said that although both sides of her family were loving, when she went to visit the non-Indian side, the family always called first, knocked before entering, let them know how long they intended to stay, and more or less what they would be doing. For the Indian grandparents, however, the family just dropped in.

"I didn't even know if they had a doorbell," she said.

They stayed as long as the mood kept them and left when "you were ready."

In helping to understand why there are a scarcity of Indians who agree to be foster parents, Tribal Elder and Tribal Social Services Programs Coordinator Ron Hudson said that "most Tribes don't believe in adoption."

Hudson also helped explain cultural differences starting with local Indian history from 1755, when the British government put a 40-pound bounty on the scalps of Indian women, far more than was offered for Indian men, he said, because by killing women, you also killed a family's future generations.

From 30 million Indians who lived

across the country when Europeans came here, today American Indians number only about three million. If you want to know why, Hudson said, it was to take ownership of "the best forests in the United States."

President Andrew Jackson proceeded with the Removal Act of 1830, ignoring a Supreme Court ruling calling it unconstitutional, said Hudson. Every Indian tribe and band across the country endured their own Trail of Tears, he said. None were left on their own land.

"Andrew Jackson began ethnic cleansing," he said.

A result of these and the injustices Indians continue to suffer is what Hudson called, "inter-generational post traumatic stress disorder, or the effects of trauma over time."

When he speaks at state and other government groups, Hudson said, he is often introduced with the warning that his ideas do not necessarily represent those of the hosting government agency.

Indigenous storyteller Ed Edmo (Shoshone-Bannock) filled both Rogue rooms on the conference's final day with the "History of Storytelling and Stories."

"Indians didn't have megapixels or powerpoints," he said. "We needed a way to teach. Stories are told to teach respect."

He said that he was wearing jeans

from J.C. Penney and does not wear regalia, both aimed at fighting stereotypes.

He told a story about why dogs smell each other's backsides, but used a more flowery word, well, maybe a less flowery word with the intention, it seems, of offending. He said that as a substitute teacher, he once told the story to an unruly group of junior high schoolers and the next day heard from the principal.

"I told him, 'We have stories about everything. Otherwise you have taboos and you need Prozac.'"

His presentation included plays and poetic works written over the years.

"The smell of salmon cooking comes to me when I dream," he said.

His two plays, one of an Indian on the street drinking from a bottle in a bag, and the other of an Indian fishing, were similar monologues, exquisitely evoking both the difficulties and the everyday qualities of a life on the street and of a life providing for family and community.

He stands and says he's got to check



Photo by Ron Karten

Indigenous storyteller Ed Edmo (Shoshone-Bannock) told stories at the Indian Child Welfare Conference in Grand Ronde.

his nets at the end of one short play.

He stands and says he'll think again about that rehab deal at the end of the other. ■

Native American Healing Practices

■ OHSU Professor Larry Murillo speaks to Salem Seniors.

By Ron Karten

Larry Murillo (Shoshone) is the type of person whose first instinct is to find the Elders in a room and sit down with them and pry loose everything they know.

Since he was young, this Assistant Professor at the Oregon Health and Sciences University (OHSU) Medical School wanted to know how to live to be 100.

"I asked old people," he told a crowd of seniors on Saturday, September 30, at the Salem Senior Center.

Until the American Indian Religious Freedom Act was passed in 1979, he said, "we were not allowed to practice our culture. We had to do it in secret. We had to hide it from our children. People in our community were killed for doing these things. Twenty five years ago, I couldn't have given this speech."

Last Saturday, however, Murillo compared traditional medicine people with mothers. "Every family had one, and like a mother helping you, she doesn't charge for that help."

Although he told stories of medicine men who could see a person's problems just by looking, or even over the phone, he also said that traditional healing processes have much in common with compassion.

Medical care as practiced in the United States is based on economics, he said, "but health is not a commodity. It is a condition."

"Illness is more than the physical



Photo by Ron Karten

Larry Murillo (Shoshone) spoke to Tribal Elders on Saturday, September 30 at the Salem Senior Center.

symptoms," he said. "Health is more than a focus on the body. You need to create a context for health."

"We stay in our own age groups and intellectual groups," he said, but we expand the context for our health by sharing between groups. "Family creates a context for you."

Some of the lessons, some of what we know works to make traditional healing effective are these:

- Restoring a meaningful role for Elders in all communities,
- Teaching people how to support those who grieve,

■ Remembering to give back, and

■ Recognizing that what affects one in the group, affects all.

"Disease is a process, not something that happens overnight," said Murillo. And likewise, "life is non-logical. Asking why something happened will torture you. Remain clear. Ask yourself, what happened? And what can I learn from this? And how can I use this to help other people?"

"Life is a situation," he said. "There is more than one solution to a difficult situation. Growth and development occur when you work through your feelings and create a different situation."

"Emotions are the language of the soul," he said. "They can create or attract diseases to you. And your attitude will place that disease in the body for you."

As examples, he said that the feet hold one's "basic principles about yourself."

The right side is your masculine side. The left side is your feminine side.

The legs hold your understanding of life: Who I am? Where do I come from? Who are my ancestors? Where am I going?

The back takes on your responsibilities and burdens.

The hips hold your sexuality, your role as a man or a woman.

The lungs hold your understanding of freedom.

The stomach holds your emotions. Often, he said, to protect yourself, you put a lot of weight around your stomach (and by extension, your emotions).

The neck is about shame, he said. When you are feeling proud, you stand straight, your head back. When you are ashamed, you slump your shoulders, and drop your head. What often happens is that people who are ashamed, try to put their best self forward, and the neck ends up trying to hold the head up and let it drop, hence neck pains from shame.

Your heart reflects your ability to give or receive love.

High blood pressure is a fear of death.

Low blood pressure is a fear of life.

"Healing is easy," he said. "Accepting responsibility for what you do to yourself is hard."

"Many words of wisdom," said Salem Senior Olive Cellucci. "I'd like to go and visit one of the medicine men."

Same for Salem Senior Joan Rokich. "I enjoyed it," she said, "and very much appreciated (his remark) that everything has a soul."

Illness and even death can be gifts, teaching you about yourself, said Murillo. He quoted an Elder who once said: "When the spirit leaves the body, I don't know who is luckier: the one who leaves his body or the one who watches." ■