

Blessing At Blue Lake

By Toby McClary

The smell of frybread occupied the air as I approached the covered area which served as the meal site for the Blessing at Blue Lake Park on Saturday, September 30. Tribal members Jon George and Lisa Archuleta of the Portland Satellite office along with other Portland-based Tribal members prepared the traditional-style foods that included lamprey donated by the Natural Resources Department, buffalo-stew with meat donated by the casino and frybread made with the expertise of Tribal Elder Pat Allen.

The Blessing at Blue Lake honored the Nichaqwli Posts located at the west end of Blue Lake near Fairview. The posts, carved by Master Carver Adam McIssac, were installed in March. Cultural Education Coordinator Tony Johnson also played a part in the design.

At the blessing, Public Affairs Director Siobhan Taylor greeted those in attendance and introduced Tribal Council member Cheryle Kennedy who spoke on the importance of the posts and what they mean to the Tribe.

"This is our ceded lands," said Kennedy. "We have been here for a long time."

Tribal Elder Cordelia Kneeland offered the invocation and both Johnson and Tribal member Greg Archuleta spoke briefly on the history of Nichaqwli which means "Stand of Pines." They also spoke of the Tribes and buildings that once occupied the Blue Lake area.

"There were many houses here," said Johnson, speaking of traditional plankhouses. "Some were as big as 200 feet long."

Also in attendance from Tribal Council was Val Sheker. An estimated 75 people were there to socialize and celebrate. This was a higher number than they had hoped for.

"It went better than I expected," said Tribal Services Representative Lisa Archuleta. "It was nice to see all of the people and the members from Tribal Council."

Metro Parks and Recreation, which manages the park, was also involved in allowing the posts to be installed and the events to take place.

In August of 2005, the Tribe hosted "Encounter at Nichaqwli" (See *Smoke Signals*, 8/15/2005) in which members of the Tourism Department and Tribal Council members honored the people that helped with the idea of Nichaqwli. They also thanked members of the Metro Parks and Recreation Department with Pendleton blankets.

Then in March of 2006, the posts were officially installed and there was a blessing in their honor.

The Blessing at Blue Lake appeared to be a great success. But the story with the most success was the one with the deepest roots.

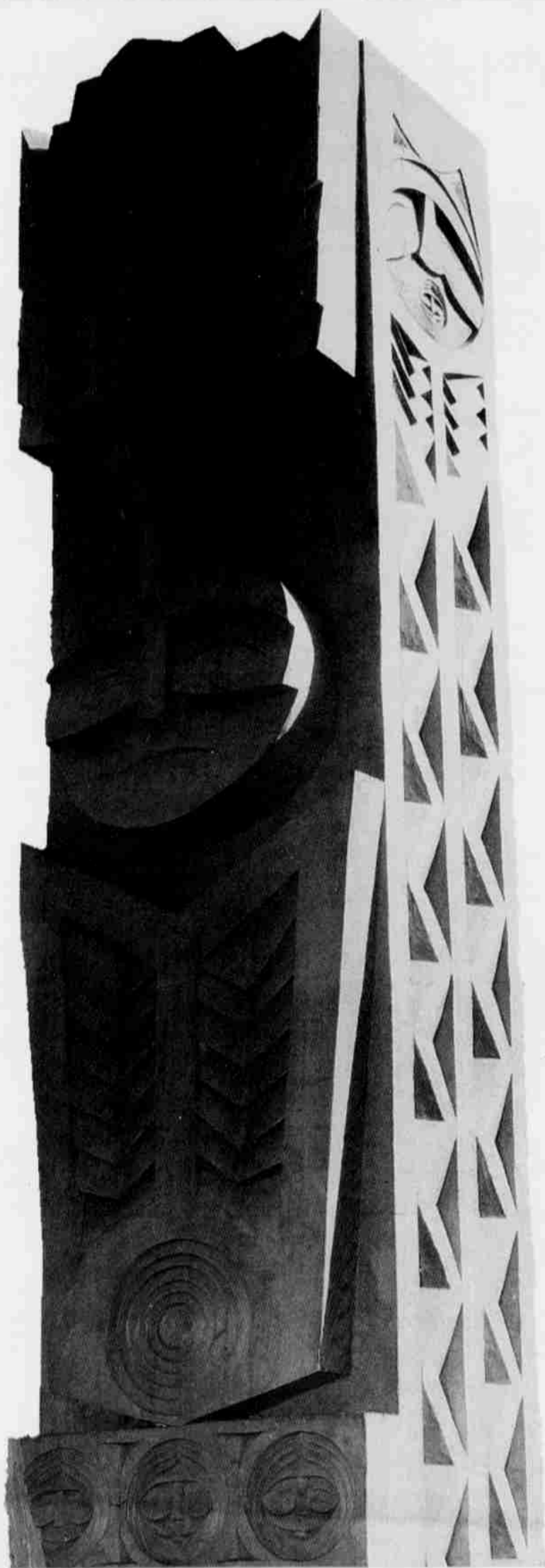
"I feel this place has always had a deep connection for my family and me," said Lisa Archuleta. "We grew up right by Blue Lake Park and my brothers and I spent endless hours playing at this particular place. Now knowing this has always been a part of our culture will keep my family and I coming back to visit often," she said. ■



Public Affairs Director Siobhan Taylor (middle) gets a lesson on making frybread from Tribal Elder Pat Allen (l) and Tribal member Lisa Archuleta.



Tribal Elder Steve Bobb (l to r), Umatilla Tribal member Dave Tovey and Tribal Council members Val Sheker and Cheryle Kennedy share a moment before the blessing took place at the west end of Blue Lake.



Tribal Elder
Cordelia Kneeland