

## Grand Ronde Medical Clinic Bids Farewell To A Man Of Many Talents

By Angie Sears

Tim Yett, Commissioned Officer with the U.S. Public Health Service, has worked at the Grand Ronde Medical Clinic for nearly two years. Yett is contracted by Indian Health Services and works for the Office of the Surgeon General of the United States. He is one of only 1500 nurses on the surgeon general medical staff in the world. Currently, the Tribe has two officers working at the medical clinic.

"I'm honored," said Yett. "To get in isn't easy; the selection process is a very long one."

Yett works as the nursing supervisor and the patient care staff supervisor. It is his responsibility to supervise the registered nurses and the medical assistants. He also does direct patient care, specializing in ambulatory care, medical/surgical, ER, public health, and behavioral health.

But medicine isn't Yett's only talent, he is a multi-instrument musician. He plays guitar, bass, percussion, and the Native American flute.

Yett has been playing guitar since he was 10 years-old. In fact, he says he can't remember not playing the guitar.

"Guitar is the main instrument for me," said Yett. "My brother-in-law, who lived in New Orleans, played guitar in a band called, The Band. They used to back up Bob Dylan. I remember when I first started playing guitar, he came and visited. And that's when I heard the story about him."

"His name was Kenny Verret; he was a well known performance musician back in the 60s. He played with some of the top acts like Bob Dylan and Janis Joplin."

"So he showed me some chops when I was a kid. He was a real neat guy." And at that point Yett was hooked.

Later, he formed a band of his own in California, focusing on blues and blues rock. He played in the band for about 15 years and has been a performing artist for about 20 years, playing clubs, parties, and festivals.

He also did some producing for his brother's band, a hard core punk band in LA, called Total Chaos.

In 2001, Yett, who is one-eighth Cherokee, attended a pow-wow and Avocado Festival in California, where he met a flute maker.

"I've always wanted to learn how to play Native American flute. I had several CD's. So when I met the flute maker, I bought one. I started playing it right in front of him, and I had never played one before."

"The flute maker asked how long I had been playing, and I said I just picked it up right now. It freaked him out; it freaked me out too. I said doesn't everybody do this? And he told me it doesn't happen that way. It really was surprising to me," said Yett. "It was like the Creator just went 'BAM!'"

Several years later, after coming to work at the medical clinic, Yett met Tribal member Jan Michael Looking Wolf Reibach. The two formed an instant friendship, but it wasn't until later at the 2005 Grand Ronde Pow-Wow, they would learn that they

share a talent and love for music.

The two friends began playing music together in the fall of 2005, and have since recorded a CD called *Breath Maker*.

"When I first heard Jan's music and started playing with him, I thought he is by far the best that there is. There is just no doubt," said Yett.

During the process of recording the CD *Breath Maker*, Keith Summers, guitar player for the songs "Breath Maker" and "Troublemaker," came to the pair and asked if he could write a guitar melody for their CD.

"I was at work and Jan called me and said that Keith has a really cool guitar line. He said 'I'm going to put a little flute to it and let you listen.'"

"When I got off work, I went straight to the studio. They had already been working for an hour or two. I walked into the studio and Jan was all excited the way that he is. (He's a 300 lb. 10-year-old.) And he said listen to this guitar; it sounds beautiful. It's the song 'Breath Maker.'"

"(Breath Maker in the Mikasuki language means Creator. How many people can basically call their CD God and get away with it? ... This whole project has been blessed from day one. It seems like everything came to us by divine placement.)"

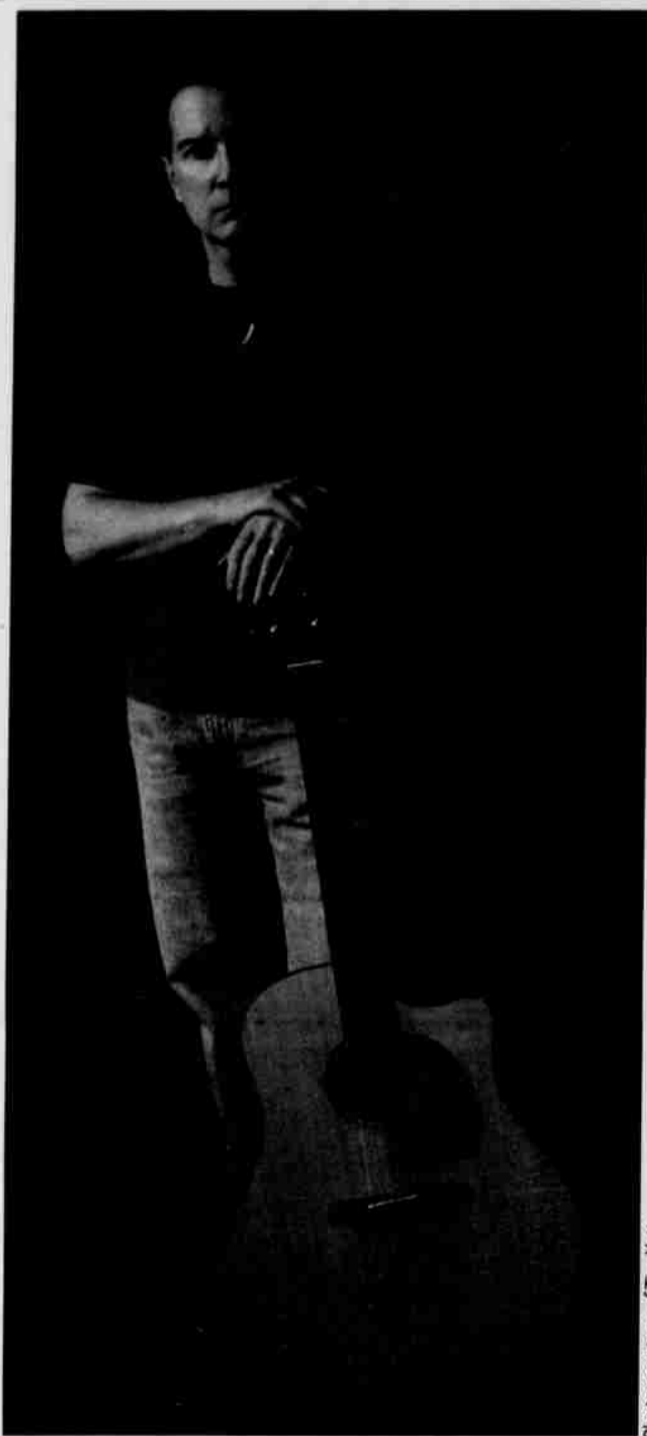
"So I went to the studio and Jan was playing his part, and I'm listening to this melody and I'm thinking this is gripping; it's just awesome. Then they said 'here's your part; you're going to play something right here on the flute.'"

"The anxiety welled up in me and I said, I can't add anything to that. It's perfect now. Why don't you just keep playing what you're playing; it's beautiful. They said 'no, we're leaving this section for you to play.'"

"I was anxious and scared. I went into the studio and Jan asked me to play the high part, and he handed me a flute that I had never played before. I said let me practice first and see what I can do with it. ... I went in, and for me I was just playing along and getting used to the song. At the end, I said Ok I think I'm ready. They said that was a take and told me to come and listen. ... And what you hear on the CD is one take, the first take I ever heard," explained Yett.

Later Yett explained that each flute has its own characteristic,

and many are made in different keys. Each flute is hand made and when you switch flute makers, you have to get used to a different style, different woods, different fingering, and you have to alter the way you use your breath by using a differ-



Tim Yett

Photo courtesy of Tim Yett

ent amount of pressure to avoid squeaking or going out of tune.

The CD *Breath Maker* has only been out for a short period of time, but has already proven to be a big success for them. The duo played a sold out show at their CD Release Concert in McMinnville last December; they played *Flute Quest* in Washington, as a premier act; and they have played several benefit concerts. They are also semi-finalists for NAMA (Native American Music Awards).

The album *Breath Maker* is a semi-finalist for seven different categories, including best Blues & Jazz Album and best instrumental. Yett is also up for best producer. NAMA will be held October 6, 2007 at the Seneca Niagara Casino & Hotel in Niagara, New York. Nominations will be announced sometime in July.

According to Yett, if *Breath Maker* wins a Native American Music Award someone from the Grammy Commission will submit it for a Grammy next year.

"Breath Maker would not be here without Tim Yett, and it would not be here without me," said Reibach.

"It was collaboration between two artists who have different styles and different talents. We wanted to focus on spirituality while trying to keep an indigenous Native sound that everyone could relate to, and it turned out great."

Currently, Yett is working on a solo project, titled *Creating Sacred Space*, which incorporates guided imagery with Native American flute music and stories of the natural world. Yett plays all the instruments on the CD, including percussion, guitar, bass, and flute. He also wrote all the stories and acts as the narrator. The CD will be available to the public sometime this summer.

Reibach has also been working on a solo project and is currently promoting his latest album, *Unity*.

"We're like brothers; we're really close," said Reibach. "Even though I'm involved with the *Unity* album, and Tim's doing his thing, which I think is really cool, and we're going down separate paths artistically, I still see him all the time. He's my brother and I support him."

Both Reibach and Yett have decided to limit the amount of shows they perform so they can focus on the important things in life, their families. Even though they have cut back on performances, they are still open to performing for charities. In fact, the pair will be performing at an upcoming benefit concert for Tribal member Jackie Whisler on June 30, and have both donated copies of their latest albums for the cause.

Yett was recently accepted into a Nurse Practitioner program at Cal State University, and will be leaving the Tribe's medical clinic on July 22. This is a four year program that will allow him to complete his courses on line while he works at the Sheridan Federal Correctional Institution as a staff nurse.

He took the position at the correctional institution because of special funding requirements for the program. In order to be considered for special funding through Indian Health Services, a student has to have at least one major agency move in their career. By moving to the correctional institution he will fulfill that requirement and will then be eligible for funding.

Yett has been competing for this program for the past two years and is looking forward to this opportunity. After completing two years of intense graduate prep work, he plans to complete his required clinical rotation at the Grand Ronde medical clinic.

"It gives me an opportunity to give something back to the Tribe because it's free labor," said Yett. "I actually like the idea that I would be providing a non-paid service better because it just takes a dimension out of it, and then it purely is service. I like that."

"Tim is a great Native American flutist. Tim is a humanitarian, and he cares more about playing for charities than he does about playing for profit," said Reibach. "His focus is on healing; cultural healing and social healing. He walks what he talks, and he talks a lot about healing. But that's how he lives his life, and I'm blessed to know him." ■