

# Tribe Hosts Annual Elder Honor Day

By Ron Karten

The Elders Committee started the program honoring a King and Queen from the Elder community – Tribal Elder Gene LaBonte as king and Tribal Elder Marcella Norwest as Queen. They shared a table up front with their partners, Billie LaBonte and Tony Selwyn, receiving all of the honors pertaining thereto.

Social Services Program Coordinator Ron Hudson had to replace LaBonte on the Color Guard when Tribal Council member and Tribal Elder Wes Buddy

West called LaBonte's name.

"It is appropriate we call you, 'King,'" said West. "And for our beautiful Queen, a great, great beautiful woman – I love this Tribal woman, Marcella Norwest, please come forward. It is a privilege and an honor to call you Queen Marcella."

And he presented Norwest with a fleece shawl and LaBonte with a lap robe, to the tune of applause aplenty.

The pair kept standing, not knowing what was next until West completed his task: "Ok," he said. "You guys can sit down now. That's all you're going to get from us."

And the party was underway.

"We really put it over on Gene," said Billie LaBonte during a break outside. "He had no idea."

Tribal member and Cultural Education Specialist Leslie Riggs led the language immersion class, Lilu, from the Tribal pre-school in a meal song, complete with drums, and followed later with an Elder participation song, Tumala, in the traditional language.

You only had to count the handful of party favor bags left over to know that more than 200 attended this year's Elder Honor Day, held on

July 20 at the gymnasium.

Tribal Elder Norma Lee put together 234 of the bags for men and women representing a dozen tribes across the Northwest and farther afield. She also made all of the tables' flags.

"Norma Lee went above and beyond," said Tribal Elder Louise Madieros, Chair of the Elder's Honor Day Committee. "The planning, the gift bags, the table decorations was all her."

The final count, including workers and guests was closer to 300, said Madieros. "It was the biggest crowd we ever had."

As always, Lee was one of many who worked hard to keep the an-

nual event full of surprises as well as all of the usual and anticipated goings on.

"We had Marcella (Norwest) and her sister, Marilee (Norwest-Davis)," said Madieros. "We had a lot of Elders who made bags, dammit dolls, who put up with me to go shopping. And they did such a good job this year. Everything just went so well."

"And of course, Kristy DeLoe, head of the kitchen, she and her crew made the lunch. It was delicious. Dinner was the same. It was beef stew that I heard was absolutely delicious, clam chowder, hot rolls, cookies and pie, green and seafood salads. Everything was just so..."

Prizes were numerous and varied, with dart boards, BBQ grilling skillets, cordless screwdrivers, luggage, dust busters and garden tools among hundreds of items. At one point, Madieros invited up all Elders who had not otherwise won anything to come and pick from the row upon row of gifts.

"I'm finally getting my team trained," said Madieros on the side, referring to vast quantities of quality gifts available.

Tribal Council member Val Sheker, among a number of Tribal Council members in attendance, told the group that by next year, the casino would have great new digs in which to hold the event. The south addition to the casino will provide an additional 135,000 feet worth of convention facilities and offices.

With the size of the Elders event, that casino space will come in handy. But in addition, the Elders will have their own activity center by next year. Currently, the Tribal

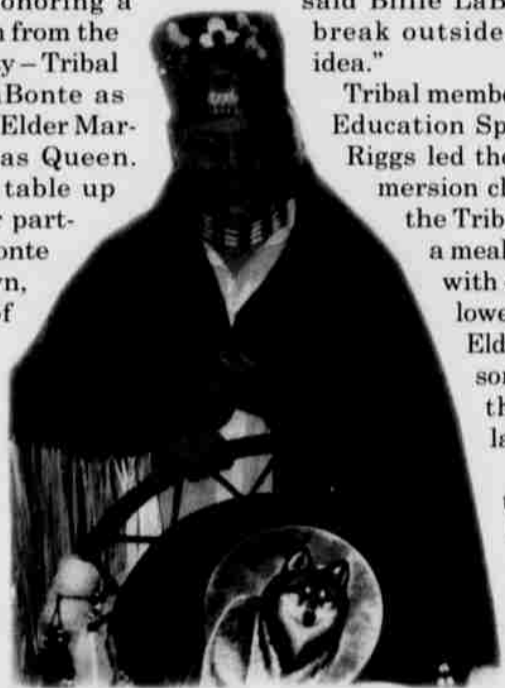
Housing Authority is estimating an Easter completion date for that project.

With these options, Madieros has high hopes for both.

"We got so many compliments," said Madieros. "I couldn't figure out what was different and then I figured it out. It's because all the other Tribes go to the casino, but we do everything here. It's more personal, and I hope to keep it personal."

The Elders Activity Center, a place for about 150, will keep it personal, but with 300 attending, the group will certainly want to make use of the new casino facilities, too, said Madieros.

"This was a very exciting one to me because people were just so friendly. I just had a ball." ■



Tribal Elder Marcella Selwyn



Tribal Elder Gene LaBonte

Photos by Summer Youth Employee Miranda Ellis



Tribal Elders pick out gifts at the 2007 Elders Honor Day held at the Tribal gymnasium on July 20-21.

Photo by Ron Karten