

(Edwards and Faas are brothers, Kathy is their mother and Larry is their grandfather). At one point during the journey, all three generations were in the canoe together.

"That is one thing that my dad has always dreamed of doing," said Kathy Cole. "It's hard to put into words ... it was absolutely perfect."

Tribal Council members Valorie Sheker and Wink Soderberg spent time with the Canoe Family during the journey.

"I'm a changed person," Sheker said. "I didn't realize how much hard work it is. I was impressed with our family and how they worked so well together as a family. It is such a huge cultural event. It was a privilege for me to be there and I will be there next year."

On Monday, July 30, thousands gathered to witness almost 80 canoes land at the Lummi Indian Reservation. The canoes gathered

about 200 yards offshore and waited to be welcomed by the Lummi Nation. Canoes from as far north as Alaska and as far south as Oregon floated side-by-side and Tribal members pounded their paddles on the bottoms of their canoes, chanting and asking to come ashore.

"When the drum beat becomes steady," said Billy Frank Jr., Nisqually Tribal Elder and master of ceremonies for the event, "everyone is welcome to come ashore."

When the drum beat steadied, all of the canoes traveled to shore and began a five-day celebration that

included traditional stick game, a wedding, lots of food, singing, dancing and gift-giving.

Each team of pullers introduced their Tribe, themselves and canoe, and also explained why the journey was important to them. More than three hours later, it was time for Grand Ronde/Chinook Canoe Family members to introduce the Tribe

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~ Grand Ronde Tribal Council member Valorie Sheker

and finally get out of the canoe after being in the vessel for almost 12 hours.

After three weeks of working nonstop, either in the canoe or on the ground crew, and struggling to get a hot shower and something

to eat, the Grand Ronde/Chinook Canoe Family performed its final protocol on Thursday, Aug. 2. On Friday, Aug. 3, the Grand Ronde/Chinook Canoe Family broke down camp for the last time of the 2007 InterTribal Canoe Journey.

"This Canoe Family represents Grand Ronde in a way that is respected by all other Tribes," Sheker said.

Started in 1989, this annual event was originally coordinated to celebrate Washington state's 100th birthday. It is known to participants as the "Healing and Unity Journey," and is designed to promote abstinence from drugs and alcohol.

The Canoe Journey also familiarizes Tribes with the trade routes used by their ancestors. Tribal Elders believe that through canoe-pulling, participants can achieve perfect harmony and balance. ■



▲ A group of about 12 Tribal youth paddled on the final day of the Canoe Journey.

► Tribal Elders Larry Cole and Dolores Parmenter take time from their schedules to sharpen knives at camp.

▼ Tribal Elder Violet Folden smiles as the canoes reached their final destination at the Lummi Indian Nation.



Photo courtesy of the Cole family