

Tribal Elder picked for national calendar

Janet Billey to appear in 2009 edition of 'Powwow: Portraits of Native Americans'

By Dean Rhodes

Smoke Signals editor

Tribal Elder Janet Billey will be featured in "Powwow: Portraits of Native Americans," a 2009 calendar by Seattle photographer Ben Marra.

Marra photographed Billey (Grand Ronde/Paiute), 61, at the Post Falls, Idaho, pow-wow in July. She will be the first Grand Ronde Tribal member to be featured in Marra's work.

Marra creates two 16-month calendars annually — "Powwow: Portraits of Native Americans" and "Native American Dance." They are usually available every July.

Marra and his wife, Linda, have spent the last 20 years traveling to Native American pow-wows across the country, documenting "the commitment and spirit of the exciting affirmations of Indian identity."

To view Marra's Web site, go to www.benmarra.com. The site shows his traveling exhibition for museums and published work.

The Marras also are working on a hard-cover book with a working title of "Faces From the Land: A Photographic Journey Through Native America." It will feature more than 150 color photos and personal narratives, and also may include Billey.

"It's a 20-year retrospective of our project," Linda said via e-mail.

Billey's portrait features her wearing a replica hat created by many coastal Tribes. The hat is cedar covered with a variety of seashells, including tiger shells, cowries, white clam shells, abalone shells and dentiliums.

Billey is the daughter of late Tribal member Elmer Tom and Christine Wewa Tom, and was born and raised on the Warm Springs Reservation in central Oregon.

"It is a beautiful world out there where you can help make regalia as I have and still do," Billey said in her self-written essay that will accompany her calendar portrait. "'Us,' as Native Americans, can work in beauty. So dance on my people." ■



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Bidding farewell



Smoke Signals photojournalist and Tribal member Toby McClary was the center of attention at a going-away party held Nov. 9 in the Governance Building. McClary, who has taken photos for Smoke Signals for four years, resigned to accept a supervisory position at Spirit Mountain Casino.

Above, telegram singer Petra Bolton of McMinnville, who was arranged by McClary's mother, Joann Mercier, messes up his hair as about 30 Tribal employees watch. Below, McClary received a Pendleton blanket from Tribal Council members Steve Bobb Sr., Kathleen Tom and Chris Mercier in appreciation of his years of service to the Tribal publication. "Toby was here for four years and I only worked with him for three months. I feel cheated," said Publications Coordinator Dean Rhodes.



Photos by Dean Rhodes

Gang affiliation becoming cultural identity

GANGS continued from front page

During Grant's Nov. 14 staff training session held in the Education Building, a PowerPoint presentation detailed gang activity in Tribal communities nationwide. Slides showed gang-related graffiti pock marking Tribal communities.

Pictures downloaded from Internet social networking sites, such as Myspace and Bebo, showed Native American youth, including people from Grand Ronde, proudly wearing gang colors, posing in gang stances and flashing gang signs.

"In the lives of certain people involved in gang activity, gang affiliation has become their cultural identity," he said.

The first steps in combating gang expansion in a Tribal community include awareness and a willingness to take the threat seriously. With 24,000 gangs in the United States that include more than 760,000 members, gangs are increasingly infiltrating suburban areas and Tribal communities, Grant said.

Dismissing youths as gangster "wannabes" often creates the potential for escalation of violent behaviors as the neophyte gang members attempt to "stand up" and

Gang warning signs

Sgt. Nathan Goldberg of the Polk County Sheriff's Office said Grand Ronde residents should be on the lookout for the following suspicious activity that might indicate gang activity:

- ◆ Graffiti that includes strange symbols or abbreviations;
- ◆ Frequent short visits by people to a nearby house;
- ◆ People who appear to be on meth ("Gang activity ties into drug abuse most of the time," he said.)

Emergency phone numbers are:

- ◆ Grand Ronde substation: 503-879-2420 (call to report suspicious activity that is not an emergency);
- ◆ 911 (call if you witness suspicious activity in progress);
- ◆ Dallas office: 503-623-9251 (call if no answer at Grand Ronde substation)

prove themselves, he added.

Although Grand Ronde is relatively remote, the distance from an urban center is not a shield. Portland is only an hour away and Salem, which also has gangs, is even closer.

One of the many gang myths, he said, is that gangs are limited to large cities.

"Every community that has a gang problem did not have a gang problem at one point," Grant said. "What we're trying to say is that there is no place in this community for this type of behavior. A community approach works. Prison is not

the answer. You can't arrest your way out of the problem."

Grant complimented the Grand Ronde Tribe for its social, cultural, educational and economic programs to combat gang activity and provide an alternative to youths from filling a void in their lives with destructive gangster behavior.

"There has been a proactive approach to gang problems in Grand Ronde," said Polk County Sheriff's Office Sgt. Nathan Goldberg. He supervises the Sheriff's Office substation in Grand Ronde.

Grant said that community coalitions, such as the Tribe's Community Awareness Team, in addition to mentoring, graffiti eradication and mural projects are a "reasoned, responsible" approach to combating gang activity.

Goldberg said his staff, which includes five deputies assigned to Grand Ronde, has worked with Tribal employees to educate residents about what constitutes gang activity and is not just petty criminal mischief. "People are more aware of gang activity," Goldberg said.

Goldberg said the Sheriff's Office does not have firm numbers on the increase in gang-related crimes in Grand Ronde because the department's tracking statistics don't label incidents as "gang-related."

"It's mostly anecdotal information," Goldberg said. "There's no way of proving if something is gang-related. A lot of it may be that people are just more aware of what might be gang activity and not that it has increased from a certain level."

"We need to recognize that the gangster mentality is present and support efforts of the Community Awareness Team," Grant said.

"We want to bring (gang activity) to the minimum that we can," Goldberg added. ■