

Powwow breaks (in) new ground

2008 Veterans' event honors Tribal Elder Marce and Sharon Norwest

By Ron Karten

Smoke Signals staff writer

For the record, the following participants in the 2008 Veterans' Powwow were the first to officially dance on the Tribe's new powwow grounds, which sits below Fort Yamhill State Park, during the weekend of July 11-13.

Tribal Elder and Veterans' Honor Guard Chairman Steve Rife; Wayne Chulik (Tlinget); Gilbert Towner (Siletz); Tribal Elder Gene LaBonte, a member of the Governor's Veterans' Advisory Board; Jim Willis, Oregon Veterans' Affairs director; Norris Merrill, Grand Ronde Honor Guard member; Kia Isham (Choctaw); Max Hoffman; Wes Weathers; Al Miller; Lynn Ostensen; Bill Moreland; Chris Tinney (South Carolina Cherokee); and Tribal member Wally West.

Also, members of the newly elected 2008-09 Veterans' Powwow Royalty including Tribal members Halona Butler (Senior Veterans' Queen), Nakoosa Moreland (Junior Veterans' Queen), Peter Nelson (Senior Veterans' Young Warrior) and Osprey Gibbons (Junior Veterans' Young Warrior), along with Tribal member and outgoing Veterans' Royalty member Miranda Provost and Tribal members Courtney Warren and Ashley Tuomi, who are also past Royalty members.

Veterans' Powwow master of ceremonies Nick Sixkiller (Cherokee) called their names to kick off Friday night's informal Grand Entry. Grand Ronde Tribal Elder Bob Tom shared emcee duties again this year.

The Veterans' Powwow also was the first event at which the Tribe's recently recovered hunting rights translated into fresh ceremonial kill for a powwow meal, Tribal Council Vice Chairman Reyn Leno said.

And as the powwow grounds opened for Tribal activities, plans were afoot to turn the area into a multi-use development that also will include a Tribal Cultural Center, RV park and historic plankhouse.

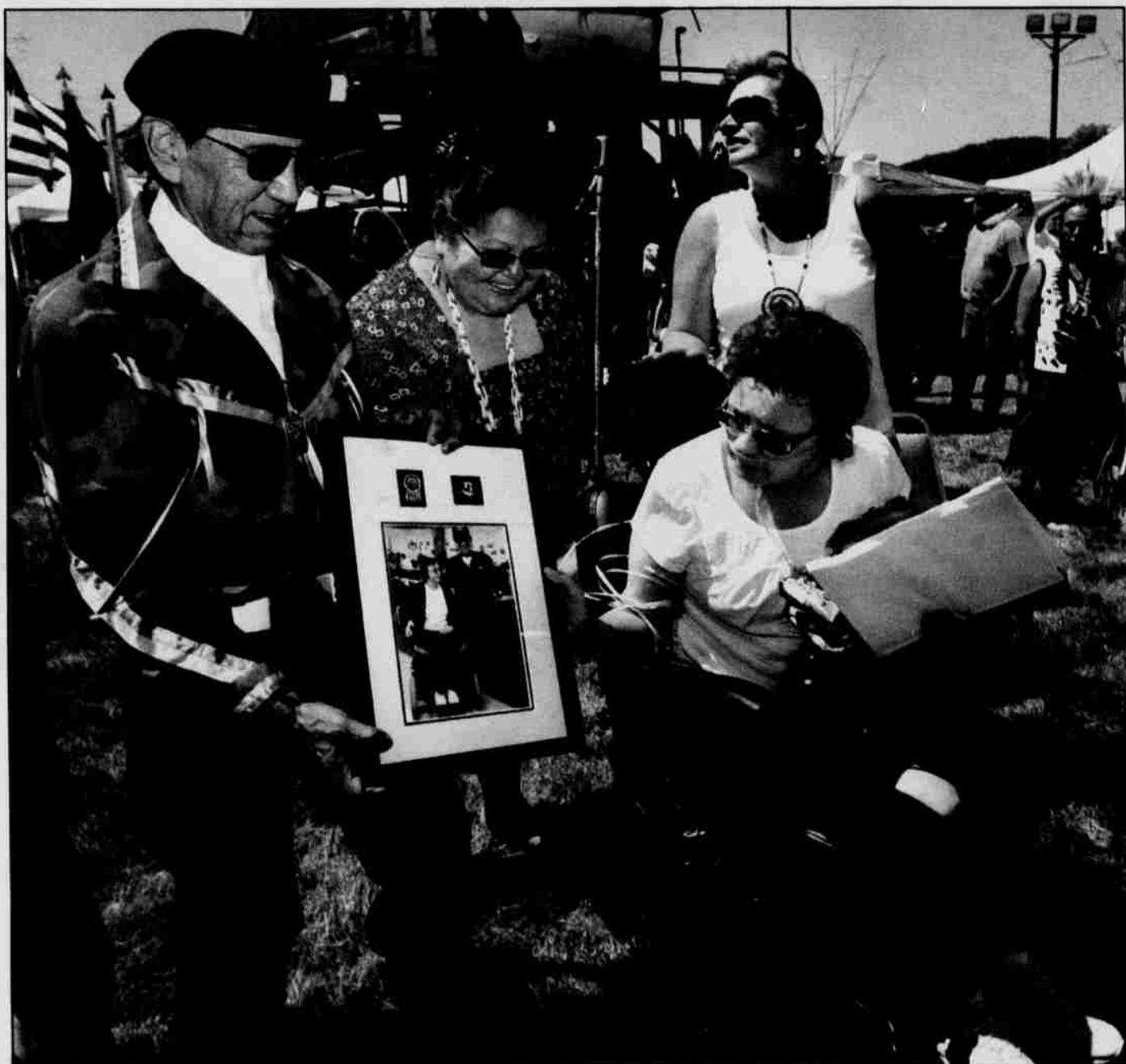
Tribally owned construction company Round Valley, LLC, was bringing in the logs and preparing the access road for the plankhouse as work continued on the powwow grounds.

Bob Tom said that for two weeks, he and his crew put final touches to the newly developed grounds, including setting up the bleachers and cutting the grass.

Billie LaBonte, wife of Tribal Elder Gene LaBonte, put weeks' worth of work into Friday afternoon's Veterans' Royalty pageant.

Teepee poles lay on the ground, splayed out like a fan, ready to join others already prepared. Likewise, sound wires were neatly spread out on the ground, the metal ends splayed like the teepee poles, ready for use.

Later, Tribal Elder and Vietnam veteran Steve Rife, 58, who as chair of the Grand Ronde Veterans' Honor Guard had a major responsibility for the powwow, also would stand these poles up and lean them together, ultimately into another teepee.



Tribal Elder Marce Norwest and his wife, Sharon, right, were honored at the 2008 Grand Ronde Veterans' Powwow on Saturday, July, 12. Sharon looks at a photo of the couple that Tribal Council presented to them as Tribal Council Chairwoman Cheryle A. Kennedy looks on. Tribal Council member Valorie Sheker is behind Sharon.

All day Friday, a team working under Tribal member and Information Systems Department Sound Engineer Wendell Olson spliced and soldered wires to connectors. He balanced the sound of eight primary speakers and four subwoofers, bringing more than 5,000

watts of power to the new powwow grounds. Telecom contractor Mark Scheelar and Tribal member Joe Loomis, who is working through the Tribal Mentorship program, helped customize the wires.

"Once it's done," Scheelar said, "(Olson) will have it for the big

powwow."

At the same time, AmVets' & Northwest Indian Veterans' Association's Lynn Ostensen and volunteer Michael Askay cleaned the Elders' shelter, hammered screen over the windows and kept garbage cans emptied.

"We put up an Honor Guard canopy," Ostensen said. "Whatever comes along, we just keep on truckin'."

"This event would not take place if not for volunteers. You got to believe in the vets."

It was 94 degrees on Saturday, 95 on Sunday.

Grand Entry started on Saturday, 26 minutes after noon, Indian time.

"We're building a strong cultural base here in Grand Ronde," Sixkiller said.

Nine drums played the weekend's music.

Tribal member Bobby Mercier thanked the Creator.

Then came the introductions by 153 veterans. Each took the microphone and introduced themselves. "Time served," Reyn Leno said, "and now it's time to honor."

"Don't be afraid to go over and shake their hands," said Siletz veteran Gilbert Towner, 1st Marine Division, a forward observer for artillery, a man wounded in his head



Newly elected 2008-09 Grand Ronde Veterans' Royalty Senior Young Warrior Peter Nelson, front left, Senior Veterans' Queen Halona Butler, front right, Junior Young Warrior Osprey Gibbons, back left, and Junior Veterans' Queen Nakoosa Moreland participate in an informal Grand Entry at the new powwow grounds on Friday, July 11, during the 2008 Grand Ronde Veterans' Powwow.