

Memorial remembers Nick Faas

Tribal descendant died in May car accident

By Ron Karten

Smoke Signals staff writer

The moment of grief goes on.

On Monday, Aug. 4, in the Tribal Education Building, Administrative Assistant Debbie Bachman wiped tears away.

"My aunt died last weekend," she said. "It didn't get to me until just now."

She had just left a memorial for Tribal descendant Nick Faas, 24, who died in a car accident in May. The memorial was sponsored by the Sapsik'walá program, a component of the University of Oregon Native American Initiative. Sapsik'walá is a Sahaptian word meaning "teacher."

In partnership with Oregon's nine federally recognized Tribes, the College of Education master's programs prepare Native students to be teachers "to meet the lifelong learning and developmental needs of children and young adults," according to the University of Oregon Web site.

During the memorial, there was a reading of Nick's application essay competing for a spot in the program.

Pat Rounds, director of the program that provides funds for Native students at the master's degree level who want to be teachers, introduced the Nick Faas that the people at Sapsik'wala got to know, and then read from his astonishing application.

"We knew Nick a short time, but had a great deal of fondness for him," Rounds said. "He had a lot of warmth and personal integrity. He was committed to his family and Tribe."

"One must find the purpose and happiness in life through themselves rather than searching in other things outside," Nick wrote in his application. "My name is Nicholas Faas and my mother is Kathy Cole, a Tribal member and

Chinuk Wawa teacher for the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde. I am writing to you in regards to the Sapsik'walá project. I feel as though I am a perfect candidate for this program because of my passion of my Native American heritage and my desire to help all Native youth understand the world and life."

Nick was a young man whose grandfather taught him hunting and carving, who worked in the Grand Ronde Youth Education program and with middle and high school students at OMSI's Salmon Camp, who was a member of the Grand Ronde Canoe Family, who participated in round dances and powwows, and then, at the time of the accident, was prepared to enter the Sapsik'wala program for his master's degree to teach Social Studies.

"I have experienced the low points of life at my father's house and the warmth and love at my mother's house," Nick wrote in his application. "Most people only experience one world, but this is what separates me from the rest. I connect with the kids who succeed and kids who struggle in the school and at home."

He was the oldest of four brothers. The three younger brothers — Zach, 18, Chris, 15, and Gabe, 12 — were all on hand for the memorial.

Gabe wore a hooded black sweatshirt with white letters. Nick's name was on the front along with the years of his life. On the back, there was an unfinished picture that Nick had drawn.

Some 50 of the sweatshirts are out in the neighborhood, courtesy of Shawn Bobb, wife of Tribal member Billy Bobb. Shawn also is an assistant Chinuk Wawa teacher in the Cultural Resources Department. He said that the sweatshirts were Gabe's idea.



Photo by Ron Karten

Tribal member Alexandra Foster, 16, left, hugs Tribal member Kathy Cole, mother of Tribal descendant Nick Faas, during a memorial for Faas on Monday, Aug. 4. Faas died in a car accident in May.

"He wanted to do something for his brother," Shawn said.

"We are so proud of Nick," said Tribal Council member Wink Soderberg. Tribal Council member Chris Mercier also shared the moment with the family.

About six members of the Grand Ronde Canoe Family, led by Travis Stewart, Tribal member, Education Department staff member and member of the Canoe Family, drummed and sang. After they started, they were joined by six others.

Nick paddled with the group last year on the Paddle to Lummi and the previous year on the Paddle to Muckleshoot.

"It was real important that we make it back from Cowichan for this," Stewart said. "Even though he was with us in spirit on the journey. We sing to honor the family."

Tribal member and fellow Canoe

Family member Brian Krehbiel gave the family the copper ring he received for participating in a Canoe Journey.

"In spirit," said Sapsik'wala co-director Alison Ball, "Nick is our Elder. He had leadership and dignity."

"Having a mother as a teacher has taught me a lot about how to have compassion for other people," Nick wrote, "and the value of education for one's happiness."

"My knowledge and understanding of my Native American culture have mostly come in the last seven years, but my passion has always been a part of me."

"I think he is looking down from heaven and laughing," Kathy Cole said through her tears, "because he always told me he would get more educated than me, and because of you," she added to the Sapsik'wala folks, "he made that happen." ■

Natural Resources youth crews



Photos by Summer Youth employee Joel Selwyn

The Tribe's Natural Resources Department had two summer youth crews this year. They worked on a variety of projects this summer, including clearing trails up Agency Creek on the reservation.

Above, left to right- front row: Jack Ham, Adam Butler, Douglass Gray, Alana Hobbs, Justin Butler, Denny Linton, Winston Mercier, crew leader Chip Holton, left to right-back row: Leif Esbenshade, Josh Harman and Eric Gretzon.



Joseph Ham

At right, on ground- left to right: Joseph Waldron, TJ McKnight, Shannon Grosse, Scott Brown, crew leader Jennifer Orlowski-Robertson, and Ricky Karnosh, up in tree- left to right: Greg Butler, Brandon Linton, Colt Davidson and Gary Lambert.

