

New grounds

Fluctuating temps didn't affect attendance, dancers at 2008 Contest Powwow

By Ron Karten

Smoke Signals staff writer

It was so pleasant on the evening of Friday, Aug. 15, for the start of the 2008 Grand Ronde Contest Powwow, it was easy to forget that a lot of the hard work went into setting up the grounds the day before when local temperatures reached 102 degrees.

It was the weekend of the first Contest Powwow held on the new powwow grounds. Called Uyxat, meaning "trail," the name embraces both the Trail of Tears endured by Grand Ronde's forerunner Tribes and also the beginning of a new trail for Tribal members.

The powwow grounds received its name on Aug. 5 when Tribal Council adopted the Chinuk Wawa word. On Aug. 13, Tribal members blessed and smudged the grounds in time for the first Contest Powwow to be held there.

In her powwow welcome on Friday, Aug. 15, Tribal Chairwoman Cheryle A. Kennedy told the story of the new name and said, "We want you to meet old friends, dance and have a good time. Let's celebrate!"

The weekend was a checkerboard of hot, warm and cool weather with temperatures again reaching 102 on Friday and 98 degrees on Saturday. Sunday experienced a major cool-down, only reaching 79

degrees.

On Friday night, which was surprisingly mild considering the triple-digit heat of the day, Frank and Susanna Garcia of Dayton visited for the 7:30 p.m. Grand Entry. They had been at the Oregon Coast, where it was foggy and too cold, and decided to stop at the powwow on their way back. They were looking for fry bread and still having fun when darkness took over and a full moon rose.

An ambulance and police were there, but the only action for them was "a few bee stings and scrapes," said Tribal member Dana Ainam, powwow chair for 11 years.

Or, as Vernon Kennedy (Paiute) said, "There's no news and I'm glad."

Neither was talking about the congested traffic along Highway 18. Weekend travelers were headed to the coast, to Spirit Mountain Casino for the Wynonna Judd concert and to the powwow.

Travelers, at times, reported five- and 10-mile backups coming from the east on Highway 18 and from the south on Highway 22 at Valley Junction. The traffic woes prompted powwow organizers to postpone Friday's scheduled 7 p.m. Grand Entry by 30 minutes.

But nobody was sitting and stewing under the big tent. More than



Photos by Michelle Alaimo

Black Lodge was one of three host drums at the 2008 Grand Ronde Contest Powwow. The group is from Washington state.

\$39,000 worth of prizes, contributed by the Tribe and Spirit Mountain Casino, drew 215 competing dancers from across the United States and Canada. Fifty craft and 15 food vendors, which is about the same as last year, also attended, Ainam said.

Among vendors this year were Tribal members Kimberly Harris and Jennifer Butler and Jennifer's mother, Tribal Elder Cheri Butler, who were raising money for David

Sears' annual Tribal float that appears in Christmas light shows. In 2005, the float won a PGE award.

It takes a lot of work to put one of these floats together, but, "When you see everybody with their faces in awe, it's worth it," Jennifer Butler said.

Also at the powwow were four naturopathic physicians, just

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Tribal Chairwoman Cheryle A. Kennedy gives a welcome speech during the 7:30 p.m. Grand Entry of the 2008 Grand Ronde Contest Powwow on Friday, Aug. 15.