

Events Center hosts 25th Restoration powwow

By Ron Karten

Smoke Signals staff writer

"I came down here to see all the good dancers," said Tribal member True Rimer, 11.

"To dance," said Tribal member Leonard Logan, also 11. "I sang, man."

Eight-year-old Tribal member Anthony Simmons said he attended the 25th Restoration Powwow on Friday, Nov. 21, at Spirit Mountain Casino's Events Center for the dancing and "having fun."

Tribal member Heyaza Brien, 11, wearing grass dancing regalia, said he was there "for the dancing, mostly."

Tribal member Dakota Rock, 11, came to "represent the Tribe."

And 9-year-old Tribal member Promise Rimer said the powwow was going "pretty good" from her perspective because of "all the other people you get to see." Promise wore regalia made by her grandmother, Tribal Elder Jackie Many Hides.

Then came a new drum number and a new dance, and all six Tribal youth ran off to the center of the floor.

At an event dedicated to the last 25 years, the Tribe's next generation already was showing the promise of the Tribe's bright future.

The Restoration Powwow drew about 500 people. As the program was getting under way, Events Center staff could see that too few chairs had been set out, and everybody moved their chairs toward the center of the room and new chairs made yet another circle at the outside.

Testifying to the growing numbers of Tribal members attending, Tribal Elder and master of ceremonies Bob Tom asked the group, "Is it me, or is it warm in here?"

For this, the first powwow held in the Events Center, Tribal members smudged the room and offered to smudge any who stepped forward and wanted the cleansing of the smoking sweet grass.

The Honor Guard included Tribal Elders Gene LaBonte, a Navy veteran, and Steve Rife, who served in the Army and Marines. Also bearing flags were Wayne Chulik, an Army veteran; Norris Merrill, also Army; Bill Moreland, a Navy veteran, Cherokee Apache and father of Tribal member Nakoosa Moreland, Veteran Royalty Queen; Honor Guard Secretary-Treasurer Christopher Tinney, Army, East Cherokee and manager of the Tribal convenience store; along with traditional dancers and Tribal members Marcus Gibbons and Deitrich Peters. Bill Depoe, Siletz, wore an eagle bonnet.

Tribal member Jesse Pee Wee Robertson, a Navy veteran from 1981-85, came with his brother and Tribal member Ken Robertson, who also served in the Navy during those years but has been away, Pee Wee said.

Pee Wee accepted the recent challenge to bring more veteran Tribal members onto the Veterans' Special Event Board. He has joined that group to help guarantee its continued existence here in Grand Ronde.



Above, Tribal member Reina Nelson dances a Women's Traditional Dance during the 25th Restoration Celebration Powwow held at Spirit Mountain Casino's Events Center on Friday, Nov. 21. It was the first powwow held in the center, which opened in May.



At left, Little Miss Grand Ronde Promise Rimer dances a Fancy Shawl dance.

Photos by Michelle Alaimo

With one leg still hurting, Tribal Elder Kathryn Harrison said, "I do believe I'm going to do Grand Entry, even with this leg." She danced in with Tribal Elder Margaret Provost.

Also dancing in the Grand Entry was Tribal Elder Marce Norwest, who attended with his wife, Sharon.

"I'm glad I made it this far," Norwest said, "but this may be my last one." He has been instrumental in the Tribe's Veterans' Powwow since its beginning, but has grown weaker in recent years while battling cancer. He looked around the crowded room. "It's good to see so many coming back home," he said.

"I'm always doing OK when I'm around people like this," said Tribal Elder Donna Casey. "There's a lot of happiness here, and a lot of

heart."

Tribal member Bear Robertson, who is back fighting fires with the Tribal Natural Resources teams, came with his family.

"I love the tradition, the ritual, the celebration," said Stanley Arend, new Tribal Finance Officer. It was Arend's first powwow. "I can feel that, that it's a spiritual time. It's exciting and fun."

Five attending drum groups included Grand Ronde's Eagle Beak Singers, Silent Hill from Portland, Little River from Eugene, the Res Boyz from Warm Springs and Johonaii (meaning "the sun"), a Navajo group based in Salem.

Jay Minthorn (Umatilla), chairman of the Oregon Commission on Indian Services, came in from Pendleton for a summit in the Columbia River Gorge, and just kept coming for the evening's excitement

at Grand Ronde. He sat with his wife, Jeri.

"I've been friends with (Tribal Elder) Bob Tom for 30 years," Minthorn said, "and for a long time with Kathryn Harrison, too."

Tribal Council members made a special presentation to Grand Ronde Culture Committee representatives, including Tribal Elders Pat Allen, Kathy Provost and Bob Tom.

Among the comments from current and former council members, Tribal Elder Chip Tom, formerly on Tribal Council, said: "Everybody knows that we're on the way to recovery. I hope we stay there."

Tribal Elder and current Tribal Council member Steve Bobb Sr. said about Termination, "Not one minute did we think of ourselves as anything other than Grand Ronde Indians."

And Tribal Elder and current Tribal Chair Cheryl A. Kennedy said: "We're thankful for all of the Elders. They were the ones who supported the work of the Restoration with their talents. They didn't think any job was too small to do for the effort." ■