

Tagging policy getting renewed attention

Incidents crossing jurisdictions in local area

By Ron Karten

Smoke Signals staff writer

On the heels of a series of local tagging incidents, the Community Awareness Team, which includes representatives of the Tribe, school district, police, security, Social Services and active community members, is putting policies and procedures in place to stem the tide.

The coordination effort aims at streamlining the process because graffiti shows up across jurisdictions. Just in the last month, tagging has appeared on private homes, city, county and Tribal property.

In response, the Awareness Team effort is developing what it's calling a graffiti eradication policy. The guiding principles for the policy are: Report. Document. Remove.

The Tribal Housing Authority, for one, has been very fast to react and effective whenever graffiti shows up at Tribal housing.

"We have ongoing instances," said Tribal Housing Authority Executive Director Carina Kistler Ginter. "It's been happening for years. Most recently, they did the entire backstops, the concrete backstops for family housing games. The letters were 6 feet tall and 4 feet wide. The report came in Sept. 10, maybe Sept 9. As soon as we found out about it, it was painted over by noon."

At the Tribal campgrounds up on the reservation, bathroom walls were painted with similarly large letters.

The key thing is, the group agrees, is that people have to get the word out that tagging is a crime and needs to be reported. As the policy emerges, reporting should go to both the Tribe's security ProStar forces and the Polk or Yamhill county sheriff's offices.

Encouraging timely reporting, Polk County Deputy Sheriff Tyrone Jenkins said, "Our response time is really good. We can be on the scene within minutes."

The effort to act quickly and effectively when it comes to tagging is vital because with tagging comes an increase in drug activity and violence. Fighting tagging is a way to keep violence out of the community. The Tribe believes it has a responsibility to provide a safe community.

Not all of the plans in the works for fighting tagging are punitive. As yet undefined, the group is working toward developing a mural project to focus some of the energy that goes into graffiti.

Tribal Elders and sisters Violet Folden and Gladys Hobbs are developing a Saddle Club aimed at youth.

"You don't have to own a horse," said Folden, but the sisters have three horses to start and will require Saddle Club participants to groom them and muck out their stalls. The reward comes afterwards. They get to go on trail rides.

In an interview between Aware-

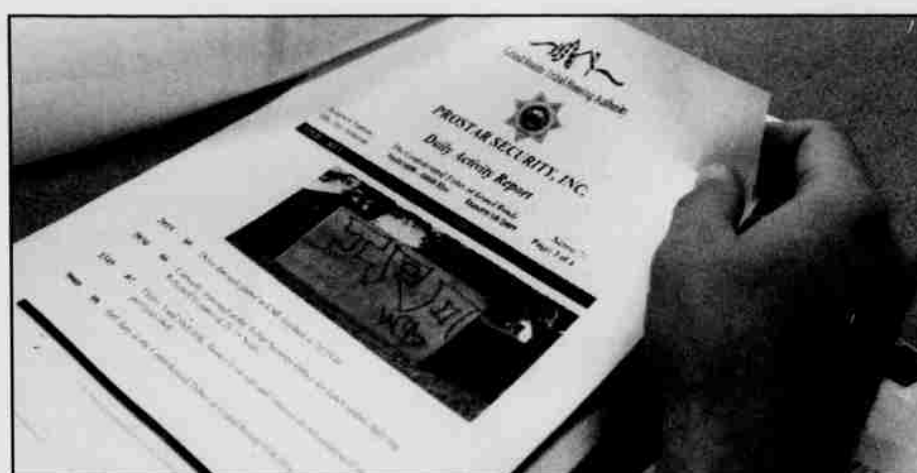


Photo by Michelle Alaimo

ProStar Security, the Tribe's security, reports and documents all incidents of graffiti they find. This is a copy of a report that went to the Grand Ronde Tribal Housing Authority due to the graffiti being found in Tribal housing.

ness Team meetings, however, Tribal Council member Steve Bobb Sr. called the behavior "disheartening."

"Having grown up in Grand Ronde, we did some things, you know, but destroying property certainly wasn't part of that," he said. "Grand Ronde was a pretty tightly knit community and we were all related, and it was pretty tough to get away with anything because your parents usually knew before you got home. If you were destroying property, that person was taking care of you. And your parents would say you had it coming. It curbed that kind of behavior."

"It's hard to figure out if they're just emulating somebody or it's their

lifestyle. It's a long lonely path to go that route.

"A lot of people have put in a lot of hard work to get us to where we are today and what we have, and we have an awful lot as everybody can see, so to have a black eye on all the good that has been done here bothers me a little bit."

"We don't want to send a message that Grand Ronde belongs to them because they put their stuff all over the place. Grand Ronde does not belong to them. If you want to spray, spray your bathroom, spray your folks' house. See how that goes over. If you want to destroy property, destroy your own." ■

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