

Culture Committee holds enrichment program

By Ron Karten

Smoke Signals staff writer

The Culture Committee, led by Tribal Elder Kathleen Provost, has been stitching together a cultural enrichment program for Tribal members and the community for some time.

"The idea had been in process since Pat Allen was chair of Culture Committee," said Tribal Elder and Culture Committee Vice Chair Betty Bly. "We've talked about it for a long, long time. The plan was to do this at every change of season."

"We call it a self-enhancement encampment to prepare for winter," Provost said.

Finally, on the weekend of Oct. 16-18, they had the tents and the teepees, the cattails and the materials for medicine bags all brought together, and everything cooperated except the weather.

Provost's husband, lifelong community member Don Hendricks, called the rain, "All kinds of beautiful medicine coming out of the sky." In the end, 77 people, 21 Tribal members, had come and gone over the three-day weekend.

Saturday morning, it was lightning and thunder, but by afternoon, about a dozen adults and children had convened at the Tribally-owned Bailey House to make medicine bags and weave coasters and small mats out of cattails.

Community member Misty Thorsgard "gathered the cattails from



Photo by Ron Karten

Tribal member Dakota Ross, 8, works on the stitching for a medicine bag. His mother, Tribal member Sarah, is helping, out of sight of the camera.

right in this area," said Provost.

Tribal member Madeline Ainsworth, 8, held up her medicine bag and described what she learned making it: "Cool, awesome. I decorated it, beaded it, put markers on it."

"She learned that needles hurt," said her mother, Tribal member Shawn Hostler.

"You put in it something close to your heart," said Tribal member

and Junior Miss Grand Ronde Nakoosa Moreland.

"You put something secret in it," said Ainsworth, "and bring it to a secret land."

Tribal members Sarah Ross and her children, 8-year-old Dakota and 7-year-old Madison, also made medicine bags in the afternoon.

Nakoosa's mother, Tribal member CeCe Kneeland, also was on hand to teach the stitches involved.

It wasn't the crowd that the Culture Committee had envisioned, but it was a cultural afternoon, formal enough to learn about cattails and medicine bags and informal enough to still run with a big black dog named Chopper all around the house.

The centerpiece of the weekend for Provost was the attendance of Gerald Primeaux (Yankton Sioux), who came out from Portland as he has for cultural events over the last four years.

Primeaux, raised traditionally in South Dakota, is a member of the Wisdom of the Elders, an award-winning musician and he speaks in many venues about Native culture. He talked about ceremonies and taking time out "to look in the air, to see the four directions," he said.

"We pray for the Grand Ronde people to go back to the traditional ways," said Provost.

"The first step in healing ourselves," said Primeaux's companion, Maura St. Martin (Cowlitz), "is praying for our ancestors." St. Martin has ancestors who died here in Grand Ronde.

"I think of it," said Primeaux, "as kind of like lighting the fire."

There is a sweat lodge behind the Bailey House, and many participated during the weekend.

The rains came and went Saturday morning, and the sun came out. ■

Tribal Council's Christmas Party For Tribal Members

Dec. 5, 2009
11 A.M. - 2 P.M.
Tribal Gym

11 - 11:45 A.M. Visit with Santa - Please bring your own camera to take photos

Noon - Invocation and Meal

1 P.M. - Children singing Christmas Carols
Door Prizes * Contest Winners

- Christmas Stocking Decorating Contest
- Categories - age 5-12 and 13-99
- Bring your stocking already decorated
- Deadline 12 P.M. for entries
- 1st, 2nd & 3rd prize for each category
- All judge decisions will be final

Please bring a gift of socks, or gloves or mittens for local children and or foster children

If you have questions please call Bonnie at 503-879-2016