

Culture Encampment returns to an earlier time

By Ron Karten

Smoke Signals staff writer

Colore (California) storyteller Coyote said, "It is time for a change. It is time for bringing back the old way. I call it bringing people back to reality."

He referred to the old ways of using foods, medicines, dances, songs and language.

And during the Grand Ronde Culture Committee's 2010 Culture Encampment, Coyote, Aztec dancers, Navajo Medicine Man James Sampson, Siletz-Shasta storyteller Pete Downey, along with some 40 children and approximately 100 visitors, worked at the old ways during this second annual event held on the weekend of Sept. 25-26 at the Uyxat Powwow Grounds in Grand Ronde.

Clocks were all set to Indian time over the weekend, and in the way that the Aztec dancers drummed and danced for nearly two hours without tiring, so too did hours pass as folks sat in separate encampments and talked, weaved, taught and ate day or night. It was a slower way of life at the encampment.

Navajo Azaan (meaning "lady" in the Diné language) Sampson sat back in the grass. She listened to the drums and attended to her smart phone. On it, she had video of a Navajo cultural encampment, similar to, but larger than, this one.

"We have them all over Navajo Country," she said, "and many different Tribes come out."

"I think it's kind of spiritual the way they use the smoke," she added after a smudging ceremony. "For Native Americans, fire is something we're all into."



Above, Tribal member Dyshani Eastman decorates a T-shirt with the help of her father, Tribal member Devere Eastman during the Culture Encampment on Saturday, Sept. 25, at Uyxat Powwow Grounds.



Tribal Elder Dean Running Bear Mercier, right, gifts Aztec Dancer Jaime Uribe, two paintings, one of an Indian hunter and one of an Indian woman, two medicine bags with turquoise stones in them and two beaded necklaces during the Culture Encampment on Saturday, Sept. 25, at Uyxat Powwow Grounds. The gifts were in appreciation for the dancers participation in the encampment.

Photos by Michelle Alaimo

Grand Ronde Tribal Elder Betty Bly, vice chair of the Culture Committee, said that she liked what she saw there early Saturday afternoon.

Bly attended with her daughter from Colorado, Tribal member Delia Weiss, a grandson, Tribal member Zachary Bly, and two great-grandsons, Alex and Aidizu Bly, for the day.

Tribal Elders Nora Kimsey and Margaret Provost came out for the activities, as did Tribal Elders Carol Logan, Linda Brandon, Claudia Leno, Jack and Susie Lash, and Tribal and Culture Committee member Perri McDaniel.

Saturday night brought out the salmon; Sunday morning at 5:30 a.m., after a night of prayer inside one of the teepees, attendees

shared buffalo short ribs and later cut up buffalo roasts with blue cornmeal mush and wild huckleberries picked by Culture Committee members at Trout Lake, Wash. Corn on the cob came later.

"The food was fabulous," said Rocky Hoiness (Siletz), founder of the Rogue River Indian History Lodge, which seeks to model stewardship of "the sky, land and water" and "recreate an actual working village experience," among many traditional practices named in its mission statement.

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

"The original idea," said Bly, "was to do this at every change of season."

"We do it to prepare for winter," Provost said.

Tribal member Amelia Mooney, 7, a Grand Ronde princess, held a walking stick that she made with a little help from her grandfather, Tribal Elder Jack Lash.

"I found the stick," said Amanda, "and he wrapped it. I carved on it a little, but just a little," she said as she pointed to the marks she had made.

shared buffalo short ribs and later cut

"A long, long time ago," said Coyote, telling a story that started in one of his dreams a long, long time ago, "the earth was not here and creatures walked on the clouds. Sister Moon and Brother Sun were very happy until a third arrived. That third was Coyote."

Adults and children alike listened in as stories of the coyote, or the porcupine, or the rock, or the clay took their own time unfolding.

Provost's kind, old dog Chopper had his pick of sun and shade and even a light drizzle with which to lie down and listen.

Lifelong community member Don Hendricks, husband of Kathleen Provost, directed the setting up and pulling down of seven teepees.

Hendricks tied an eagle feather to the chief pole of one of the last teepees to go up. And a story went up with it.

Last spring, when Grand Ronde Tribal Elder Dean Mercier was about to have heart surgery, Hendricks told him to pray "into that feather," and look toward the fall of this event. Hendricks promised he'd put that eagle feather up in honor of Mercier's recovery.

Mercier and his wife, Christine, who gave gifts to the dancers, were on hand when that eagle feather went up on the chief pole.

"Damn near back to my fighting weight," said Mercier, 80. ■

Census award



Photo by Michelle Alaimo

Tribal Council Vice Chair Reyn Leno, front left, and, second row from left, Tribal Council members Chris Mercier, Toby McClary, Wink Soderberg, Jack Giffen Jr. and Steve Bobb Sr. were presented a framed certificate of appreciation by Shannon Squally, a U.S. Census Bureau partnership assistant, on Thursday, Sept. 16. The certificate recognized the Tribe's participation in the 2010 Census. The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde Tribal member participation rate in this year's Census was 60 percent.

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