

# Tribal youth chooses a canoe for school project

**Saghaley Lewis' project expands knowledge of Oregon's Native Americans in fourth grade**

By Ron Karten

Smoke Signals staff writer

Tribal member David Lewis's interest in and excitement about Tribal culture has been passed down to his 10-year-old son, Saghaley, who just finished fourth grade and also is a member of the Tribe.

You might call it historical success, the flip side of historical trauma.

When the boy's fourth-grade class at Swegle Elementary in Salem was making models of Oregon Trail-type wagons, "We encouraged him to make a canoe instead," said Lewis, who is manager of the Tribe's Cultural Resources Department.

Saghaley liked the idea right away.

This story played out just as the Willamette Heritage Center at the Mill canoe exhibit was ending its run in May.

"He looked at the exhibit as a way to learn more about the canoes," David said. "He took some pictures and then we created a small canoe for him and he painted it."

"At first, his teacher said, 'We don't want him to look different,' but we said, 'This is inappropriate for him as an Indian. Why not do something more appropriate for his



Photos courtesy of David Lewis

**Tribal member Saghaley Lewis, 10, wheels the canoe he made around Swegle Elementary in Salem at the end of last school year. When his fourth-grade class was making models of Oregon Trail-type wagons, he was encouraged by his father, Tribal member and Cultural Resources Department Manager David Lewis, to make a canoe instead. Making a canoe was more appropriate for Saghaley's Native American culture, his father said.**

culture?"

"He's presenting a different story of history and culture to his class. Everybody's of one mind with pioneers and wagons; Natives used canoes. Why can't we (as Natives) feature that history? In public education today, there is not enough emphasis on Native culture."

As a child, Lewis also attended Swegle Elementary, and noted,

"Education about Oregon Indians was nonexistent in my educational experience. What I did get was the history of Native people who helped with western expansion, like Sagawea, who served as a guide and translator for the Lewis and Clark expedition."

"So, for Oregon, for education over the past 30 years, not much has changed."



**Tribal member Saghaley Lewis, 10, shows off the canoe he made for a class project last school year at Swegle Elementary in Salem.**

"It's an issue of historical, cultural competency for the school district itself."

Toward the end of the school year, when the day came for students to wheel around their covered wagons, Saghaley wheeled the canoe around the school.

"Saghaley's project did stand out," said Lewis, "and he was asked many questions by other students. We hope this opened up some possibilities for the students that they will explore later in their lives."

Today, the canoe sits in the Lewis living room.

"We're very proud of being a part of it," Lewis said. "There is only a small window in fourth grade for education about Tribal history, and we need to continue to push for culturally diverse and relevant education for all students." ■

## Parking is \$1 or can of food

POWWOW continued from front page

(Tsuu T'ina). Head judge will be Lara Ike (Yakama/Rock Creek Wasco) and Freddie Ike Jr. (Yakama/Rock Creek Wasco) will be the arena director.

There will be parking available at the Uyxat Powwow Grounds for a \$1 or a donation of a can a food, and there will be a shuttle running from Spirit Mountain Casino to the powwow grounds. There will be free camping available at the powwow grounds.

Also, pets are not allowed inside the powwow arena. ■

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## School supply gift cards available

School supply gift cards will be available from the Tribe's Youth Education Department for Tribal youth in grades kindergarten through 12th grade from Monday, Aug. 15, through Friday, Aug. 26, between the hours of 8 a.m. and 5 p.m.

Parents must provide either the youth's Tribal ID card or CIB. The gift cards cannot be mailed out. Tribal members who live out of the area may have a family member sign for a gift card with a permission note and the youth's proof of Tribal enrollment.

For more information, contact Toni Mercier at 503-879-2101 or [toni.mercier@grandronde.org](mailto:toni.mercier@grandronde.org). ■

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