

## Moreland graduates from Chemawa in three years

By Ron Karten

Smoke Signals staff writer

Nakoosa Moreland graduated from Chemawa Indian School on May 13, a year early, as salutatorian with a grade point average of 3.8 out of a possible 4.0.

Nakoosa, 17, served on Grand Ronde Royalty, ending as Senior Miss, for many years.

She favored English, she said, "because the class is more involved" rather than math where lectures are more the rule. "Whatever I do in the future," she says, "I'll need good English."

The Chemawa system offered extra classes and Nakoosa took more classes than she needed – an extra two each semester.

And the last semester, Nakoosa was a class short and her family made sure she got to Chemeketa Community College every Saturday morning to pick up that last class.

"She dug in and decided, 'My gosh I can graduate a year early,'" said her mother, CeCe Kneeland. "She was very determined and motivated to do it. She had a lot of discipline. And I'm so proud of her."

"I'd heard about students graduating early my freshman year," said Nakoosa. "A couple of seniors graduated a year early, and I decided I also wanted to graduate early. It just made sense to me to start college early. I told my mom at end of sophomore year.

"At first, everyone was like, why would you want to? But then, I started talking to my family, and they thought it would be the best

thing for me to do. Just like stability. It would be better for me to go right to college."

After an Internet search, she settled on the University of Minnesota, Morris campus. "I didn't want to go to an all-Native college," she said. "I was at a Native school for three years, and I wanted a different atmosphere."

The college, with about 20 percent Native students, also was an old Native American boarding school, like Chemawa.

Nakoosa was part of a program called Advancement Via Individual Self-Determination, with the acronym, AVID. AVID students signed "a contract" promising to graduate with all the other members of the program.

"I felt bad about graduating early," she said. She hesitated to tell her adviser, who she thought would be let down by the news, but Nakoosa said, "She was fine with it. She wanted to know about my college plans.

"It was like a college prep course. I started out freshman year. The class taught you how to be a good student with note-taking, problem solving, how to answer the question without knowing everything about it."

The school atmosphere this year was "all about change," she said.

"We got Apple iPads to learn different ways in the classroom. We were taught to be more than we thought we could be, and to get along with each other."

It was in early summer in 2012 that the school chose 60 students to



Photo by Michelle Alaimo

**Nakoosa Moreland recently graduated from Chemawa Indian School in Salem one year early, finishing high school in three years. She was salutatorian of her class.**

come back to Chemawa early.

"The idea was to bring the student body more together, and so move the school forward in a better way," Nakoosa said.

Groups formed with tutors. Students were put together with others they may not have associated much with.

"At first, all of us were really mad," Nakoosa said. "The first day, everyone was super mad because we were told that it was about

sports. It was about sports, and leadership and the educational side to it."

The program included online classes, from which Nakoosa chose Algebra II, maybe the hardest class she took at Chemawa.

"I passed with a C," she said. "My last report card was all As and one C."

Nakoosa said that socially, Chemawa was not all that different from public and private schools, with cliques and peer pressures, and if you are thinking of becoming a substitute teacher there, watch out. In addition, she said, "Rumors travel so fast there."


For all that, Kneeland said that though she had some doubts in the beginning, the school turned out to have some wonderful benefits.

"Chemawa does offer very unique opportunities for young Native American students to interact together and learn together and share with one another. I thought it was a wonderful benefit.

"I'm just looking for her to do well in whatever vocation or occupation she does choose," Kneeland said. "She has it in her that she wants to get her education and I think that's wonderful. Nobody can give that to you, and nobody can take that away from you.


"She's been such a blessing in my life. She's the youngest and I'm just happy and pleased. She has a lot to offer and she's just been a wonderful, beautiful daughter."

Nakoosa is due at the University of Minnesota on Aug. 28. ■



# Wawa Pus Tənás

## Speaking for Children



### I am for the child

## History

- I am for the child knowing the history of the Grand Ronde Tribe
- I am for the child knowing their individual family's history
- I am for the child knowing how far Tribes, including Grand Ronde, have come

Tribal Council member  
Kathleen Tom

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