

2014 Contest Powwow

By Ron Karten

Smoke Signals staff writer

Before the first Grand Entry for this year's annual Grand Ronde Contest Powwow, Foster Care recruiter Amanda Mercier staffed the Children and Family Services booth on the north side of the big tent.

Mercier did double duty, however, also helping her 9-year-old son, Mason, with the finishing touches as he dressed in his regalia for the upcoming grand entries and fancy dances.

The Contest Powwow, held Friday through Sunday, Aug. 15-17, at úyxat Powwow Grounds off Hebo Road continued to live up to its reputation as being one of the largest gatherings in the Pacific Northwest. This year, the powwow drew 261 registered dancers and overflow crowds to watch beneath the big tent.

Dancers, depending on age group, competed for first-place prizes valued from \$150 to \$1,000 in 20 dance categories. Grand Ronde dancers won five prizes in all.

Booths for Tribal police, housing, Fish and Wildlife and many other programs, not all of them from the Grand Ronde Tribe, were set up outside the tent with brochures stacked neatly. People who staffed the booths chatted among themselves, waiting for the first Grand Entry at the start of the weekend. They provided information and answered questions for the powwow crowd.

Among them was Robert Upham, director of Blue Pony Lacrosse, a subsidiary of the Survival of American Indians Association. Started in 1995, the association promotes lacrosse as a sport that offers health and resilience to Tribal youth, as well as creating greater opportunities in sports, art, media and education. It also has been successful, said Upham, for "solving differences."

The program now reaches 2,500 youth in Native American communities. It has provided more than 1,300 volunteer service hours and handed out more than 1,500 lacrosse sticks and equipment.

In addition to the service booths, the powwow attracted 15 food vendors and 51 craft vendors.

Then, it was an amazing start to this 2014 Contest Powwow. Grand Entry on Friday night, scheduled for 7 p.m. as always, saw nearly nobody lined up at the west end of the big tent where Tribal leaders, Royalty and dancers from all over usually congregate.

The opening was pushed back



The newly crowned 2014-15 Grand Ronde Royalty Queens, from left, Little Miss Grand Ronde Isabelle Grout, Junior Miss Grand Ronde Iyana Holmes and Senior Miss Grand Ronde Promise Rimer take their first dance after being crowned at úyxat Powwow Grounds on Friday, Aug. 15.

Visit the Tribe's [facebook](#) page to see more photos



From left, Merit Leht-Smith, vice president of the European Language Equality Network in Estonia, her husband Matthew Smith and Andres Vares, also with ELEN, walk with Jan Looking Wolf Reibach, Tribal Land and Culture Department manager, during Grand Entry of the 2014 Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde Contest Powwow held at úyxat Powwow Grounds on Saturday, Aug. 16.

18, the dance served "to remind our children that school is cool," said Committee Chair Tammy Cook.

"Our youth education program has a vision of providing a safe,

healthy and educational environment that values young people. We help build Native youth into positive role models and leaders of our future," Cook said.

a half-hour owing, said Powwow Master of Ceremonies Edmund Nevaquaya, to traffic jams on the roads leading from Portland.

At 7:25, still just a scattering waited in line. At 7:30, Tribal leaders, Royalty and dancers came in with gaps between groups. Dancers kept coming though, and before they were done dancers closed the gaps and filled the grounds beyond bursting. It may have been the largest Grand Entry ever for a Friday evening.

"How much better can you get for a Friday night?" said Tribal Council Chairman Reyn Leno. "We're going to have to get a bigger tent."

Dance specials during the powwow included Women's Traditional and Men's Round Bustle. The Education Committee and Education Department sponsored another special. For boys and girls under



Kosah Quenelle competes in the Boys Grass dance category during the 2014 Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde Contest Powwow held at úyxat Powwow Grounds on Saturday, Aug. 16. He placed third in the category.