

'Western diet has not been kind to our people'

FIRST FOODS continued from front page

Navajo fry bread, spring greens salad, rabbit soup, camas cakes, acorn soup, tarweed tarts and blackberry cobbler started filling up the plates of the famished, it became more and more difficult to not sneak a bite. Some youths, who will remain anonymous, succumbed to temptation and snuck under a table for a few bites of fry bread slathered with blackberry jam.

After most of the food was distributed, Gibbons blessed the water with a sweat lodge song and then led attendees in reciting the Chinuk Wawa names of the menu items, such as mawich for deer, lakamas for camas and limolo-sapil for tarweed, to recognize the spirit of the foods.

Museum and Cultural Center Specialist Reina Nelson also explained the tradition of a spirit plate that was prepared for Tribal ancestors and placed next to where the food was being prepared.

Finally, the salmon being cooked on dogwood stakes out back in the fire pit by Jade Unger and Joe Hostler started being brought in.

A meal song was sung by Unger and several other Tribal members and then Gibbons said quite succinctly, "Eat!", and nobody disagreed with him.

The family-style meal, which included traditional foods as well as Reservation-era favorites, was a rousing success for the Culture Committee, which did not hold a First Foods Celebration in 2014.

"For everyone who shared the day with us, we invite you to keep that spirit going as we move into the new gathering season," said Culture Committee Secretary Sarah Ross.

Andrea Grijalva and Kaylene Berry, dressed in regalia, greeted people arriving at Chachalu and gifted them necklaces.

The celebration officially started at 11:25 a.m. as Nelson welcomed attendees and Gibbons and Ross spoke.

Gibbons, after acknowledging Culture Committee Chair Betty Bly who was unable to attend because of a medical emergency, stressed the cultural and spiritual aspects of the food and encouraged attendees to abandon the fast-food mentality of modern-day society.

"This is very important to our people, the sustenance. All of the berries and animals, the four-leggeds that gave their lives over the generations," he said. "These tell a story of where we've been and where we are going."

"We have to let go of that McDonald's mentality in our youth and teach them that sometimes it takes a little time to prepare something that is way better for you. No MSG – and that's not Marcus Scott Gibbons either."

"In our family, food has always been extremely important," Ross said. "One of the things that my Mom (Elder Kelly Nelson) has always taught me is that what you put into the food is what makes it good. She always said if she was angry that day or frustrated while

she was cooking, then dinner didn't turn out. The love you put into that food, the spirit, the respect for the ingredients ... that's what makes the food good and that is what nourishes us."

"What an honor it is to say that our first foods have reached a level of honor in our culture," Jon A. George, who is the Tribal Council liaison to the Culture Committee, said.

Tribal Council members Chris Mercier and Denise Harvey both discussed the health benefits of traditional diets.

"The western diet has not been kind to our people," Mercier said, citing a book about food that discussed how a Native diet helped a group of indigenous volunteers improve their health over a six-week period. "That is why opportunities like this to learn about what we ate and to learn to be healthier, you can't turn them down."

Harvey said one of her goals upon joining Tribal Council was to support the community garden, encourage people to eat organically and push for food sovereignty.

"We have a very productive community garden now," Harvey said. "We have an amazing food bank in our community and I hope that this revitalization of healthy, Native foods will all trickle down and someday we'll be a healthier population."

Tribal Royalty – Savannah Ingram, Mabel Brisbois, Promise Rimer, Kaleigha Simi, Iyana Holmes, Isabelle Grout and Hayley Lewis-Little – performed "The

Lord's Prayer" and George gave the invocation.

Cultural Protection Program Manager David Harrelson welcomed guests to Chachalu and explained that the museum's name means "the place of burnt timber" in Tualatin Kalapuya.

"Places that are burned out are good places to get food," Harrelson said about traditional food-gathering practices.

The meal provided numerous opportunities for Tribal members and guests to eat old favorites and sample new foods, such as pheasant, lamprey and blueberry tarweed tarts.

Mercier said he was surprised by the taste of quail.

"Quail is good," he said. "I have only had it once before."

The meal was topped off with dessert – Tillamook huckleberry ice cream – as Culture Committee members gave away T-shirts, coffee cups and other gifts.

After the event, Ross thanked those who worked behind the scenes, including Unger, Grand Ronde Food Bank Coordinator Francene Ambrose, the Land and Culture Department, Youth Education, Grand Ronde Royalty, Youth Council members, the Natural Resource Department, Elders Committee, ceremonial hunters and Tribal Council.

Also attending the celebration were Health Services Executive Director Jeff Lorenz and Tribal Elders Margaret Provost, Wink Soderberg, Gladys Hobbs, Violet Folden and Ann Lewis, among many others. ■



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Archery Day



May 16, 2015 - 9:00 AM - 4:00 PM

The Natural Resources Parks and Recreation program would like to invite enrolled Tribal member families for a day of archery at the EE Wilson Wildlife Area archery range near Corvallis, Oregon. This is a monthly event hosted by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. There will be instructors and loaner equipment available for those in need.

This is a no cost family event and a sack lunch will be provided.

Space is limited. To reserve your spot or for any questions please contact Jerry at 503-879-2337.

Minors under the age of eighteen will need to be accompanied by a parent or guardian.

