

First Agency Creek Round Dance was held in April 2003

ROUND DANCE
continued from front page

Youth Empowerment & Prevention has been preparing for the event by sponsoring several gift making workshops in order to create giveaways for guests.

Additionally, Children & Family Services hosted three ribbon skirt and shirt making workshops. Fabric, ribbon and supplies were provided.

The first Agency Creek Round Dance was held in April 2003 and subsequently held annually until the COVID-19 pandemic forced the cancellation of the event in 2020, '21 and '22.

The event is an opportunity for Tribal members to dance with their ancestors as they join hands and circle around drummers throughout the evening and early into the next morning, and also is a celebration of sobriety and community health and wellness, regularly

attracting 400 to 500 attendees.

"It's a whole ceremony in itself, it's not just a bunch of people coming together and singing," Mercier said in a 2016 Smoke Signals article about the Round Dance. "For us here, we want to do it right. It also ties back to other ceremonies like the Ghost Dance; that's how powerful that Round Dance is."

Mercier was responsible for starting the Round Dance tradition in Grand Ronde because of the healing nature of the ceremony and what it can do for a Tribal community.

"All of Friday until midnight and all of Saturday until midnight is the time that we are dancing with our ancestors, we're dancing with those spirits and it is to bring that healing and teaching back. That's why people get up and dance – it's a healing dance," Mercier said.

To hear Mercier discuss more about Round Dance, visit www.spreaker.com/show/smokesignalspodcast and search for Episode 8. ■

A first for the Tribe: Whale harvested from Sunset Beach



Courtesy photo by Greg Archuleta

Tribal members Nakoa Mercier, left, and Cristina Lara harvest a fin whale on Friday, Feb. 16. The whale washed up on Sunset Beach near Warrenton earlier that month and the Grand Ronde Tribe is the only tribe harvesting the whale.

By Katherine Warren

Smoke Signals staff

After a dead male fin whale washed up at Sunset Beach near Warrenton last month, Tribal Historic Preservation Manager Briece Edwards and Tribal Cultural Advisor Bobby Mercier recognized an important potential cultural opportunity.

Edwards contacted the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, which worked with the other agencies such as Oregon State Police, Oregon Parks and Recreation, and local agencies at Sunset Beach to receive permission to harvest the whale. It's a first for the Grand Ronde Tribe.

NOAA issued a harvest permit for the whale and while Edwards was coordinating that aspect, Mercier contacted Chinook Tribal Chairman Tony Johnson to ask permission to enter their traditional homelands.

"We were there within a week to harvest it and we are working with not only NOAA, but Camp Riley and Oregon Parks and Recreation, as it is still open to the public," Mercier said.

Added Edwards, "NOAA saw this as a timely matter for harvesting this gift and we want to thank all the agencies that helped make this possible. It's nice to see this practice coming back to our Tribe."

Grand Ronde is the only tribe harvesting the 46-foot long whale, removing a fin and lower jaw bone. There are also plans to harvest the baleen and more bones. The bones will be carved to replicate work from Tribal ancestors and there will be carving classes as well. The baleen will be used for weaving small baskets and more. ■

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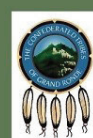
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