

Lummi Tribe
opens boarding
school to
support students

By Lynda V. Mapes
Seattle Times

SEATTLE — For Lummi elder Fran James, boarding school was a place where she lost her language just to stay alive.

“It was survival,” said James, 84. After her parents died when she was a child, she went to a series of boarding schools, where she was forbidden to speak her native language.

But she shed tears of joy Thursday as a guest of honor, helping to open a new residential academy at the Lummi Reservation: a home built just for them, right next to their school, to help provide the support they need to succeed academically, and in life.

“This is a dream come true,” James said, watching as students, tribal members and more than 100 well-wishers toured the new facility, and shared a blessing ceremony and salmon feast to commemorate the opening of the Lummi Youth Academy.

The academy will serve as many as 40 kids who will come here to live by the school’s motto: hard work; healing; love; trust; respect and fun.

Built at a cost of \$2.1 million, the academy was four years in the making. It will cost about \$1.4 million a year to run, funded by the tribe. A combination of foundations helped fund the planning and construction, including a grant from the Gates Foundation.

With a staff of 21, the school will provide a range of services to kids from grades 8-12; younger children might be included later.

And unlike the boarding schools of the past, this school is intended to be a support for Indian students and their families, and to strengthen students’ cultural pride and identity.

There are 26 students enrolled already, including kids from the Cowichan First Nation in Canada and the Swinomish and Nooksack tribes. Students from the Lummi community have first crack at enrollment in the academy, but children from other tribes are welcome if there is space.

Student R.J. Roesbery showed off his room, so fresh and new and clean, with his own bed, dresser, desk and wardrobe.

With the academy just steps from the Lummi Nation School, “This will help me get to school on time,” he said. “I am always missing the bus.”

Heather Leighton, a Lummi tribal member and principal at the Lummi Nation School, said that after just a few days, she already sees a difference in student performance. Thanks to the academy, she’s seeing kids in class who had been chronically late and absent in the past.

She said the academy should help the students reach higher standards set by the tribal school board this year. Students now must have passing grades to participate in sports, and she is expecting better attendance.

Families are invited to join their kids for dinner, and help with homework. Kids may live at the academy year-round if they choose. They receive free room and board, around-the-clock mentoring and support, academic advising, mental-health counseling, and cultural and spiritual support.

For some students, the academy will offer their first regular routine, including three meals a day and their own bed. The school is intended to provide a place for healing and growth for not just students, but for their family, too.

Elder Diane Vendiola, called by the tribe to the ceremony, remembered how her grandmother ran away from home at the Swinomish reservation, rather than be torn from her family and sent to boarding school.

“Lummi has come full circle; we no longer have to be taken away from our families to go to school.”

Hopi High elects four royalty members

By Stan Bindell
For the Independent

POLACCA, Ariz. — Native American language, talent and culture was on display as Hopi Jr./Sr. High School selected its four royalty members.

About 250 people piled into the auditorium to watch the pageant.

During the pageant, Humewysi Sockyma was selected Miss Hopi High, Gregory Lomakuvaya was named Mr. Hopi High, Canicia Weston earned honors as Miss Hopi Junior High and Cameron Curley was selected Mr. Hopi Junior High.

Sockyma, an 18-year-old senior, said she felt happy about winning and glad she went through the process of the pageant. During the pageant, each contestant had to identify themselves, speak about what is important to them and perform a talent.

“I’m glad that everybody participated,” she said. “I wish everybody best of luck for next year.”

Sockwyma said she was surprised that she won because there were so many quality candidates competing. She added that she will do her best to represent Hopi High proudly.

Her message to her fellow students is that they should look up to people who make them proud.

“I hope to be a good role model in a good way,” she said.

For her talent, Sockyma sang a traditional Hopi song about kachinas coming in the early morning and singing to their fields to have a good day — and not let anything bad get in their way. The song also calls for everybody to be safe and secure.

Sockyma said she thanks everybody who supported her and wants them to never give up.

Sockyma has a 3.8 grade point average.

She is on the wrestling team and active with the Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps.

She plans to major in wildland firefighting, archeology or zoology at Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff next year. She is the daughter of Mitchell

and Georgine Sockyma. Gregory Lomakuvaya, a 17-year-old senior, said being selected Mr. Hopi High by a panel of judges was a great experience and showed that his hard work during the past year paid off. He previously served as

Mr. Hopi Junior High. “I will represent the school to the best of my ability,” he said.

Lomakuvaya’s message to his classmates is that education is important and they should continue their education.

“Everyone can go

after their dreams. There are no boundaries. You just have to try hard to do a lot of good with your life,” he said.

For his talent, Lomakuvaya played the flute. He said this helped him stand out as he was only flute player.

“It was a song for my grandma who passed away. The song wishes her a good journey,” he said.

Lomakuvaya is active in National Honor Society, Student Council, Gifted and Talented and serves as manager for the volleyball team. He is planning to study to become an x-ray technician at Pima Community College in Tucson. He is the son of Felicia Namingha and Wayne Poleahla.

Cameron Curley, a 12-year-old seventh-grader, said it was “great” that he won because he had never won anything like this previously.

Curley said he will wear the crown with pride. His message to his classmates is to keep everything up that will help them accomplish their dreams.

For his talent, Curley sang a song about the farmers wanting the rain to come.

“I’m surprised that I won. I think it’s still sinking in,” he said.

Curley, who maintains a B average, plays football. He is the son of Barbara Polingyama and Stanley Curley.

Canicia Weston, a 12-year-old seventh-grader, said it felt wonderful to become Miss Hopi Junior High because it was her first time winning royalty.

“I just like looking at the crown,” she said.

Weston’s message to her classmates is that she will be there at other schools whenever they want her to represent Hopi Junior High.

For her traditional talent, Weston sang a traditional Hopi song.

“I was surprised I won because this was my first time and I didn’t think I would make it,” she said.

Weston, who maintains an A average, plays volleyball and basketball.

She is the daughter of Phillip Weston and the late Esther Honanie.



Courtesy photos

Clockwise from top left: Mr. Hopi High, Gregory Lomakuvaya; Miss Hopi High, Humewysi Sockyma; Mr. Hopi Jr. High, Cameron Curley; Miss Hopi Jr. High; Canicia Weston.

Thousands to gather
for 12th annual powwow

By Herbert Atienza
Riverside Press Enterprise

SOBOBA INDIAN RESERVATION, Calif. — Thousands of people are expected to admire colorful native regalia, listen to bird singing, and cheer on the gourd dancers over the next three days in celebration of the 12th annual powwow hosted by the Soboba Band of Luiseño Indians.

More than 600 performers, ranging in age from tots to seniors, and belonging to dozens of tribes throughout the United States and Canada are scheduled to participate.

The public is welcome to attend the free event, which starts this evening.

Performers will compete for prizes.

The powwow will be held in the arena of the Soboba Casino, located at 23333 Soboba Road, San Jacinto.

People who attend will have a chance not just to share in the festivities and learn about Native American culture.

“It’s a unique opportunity, not just for people who will watch the events, but even for us who will be singing there,” said Joe Ontiveros, the Soboba tribe’s cultural resource director

and a member of the San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians.

He said the bird singers will sing songs telling of the migration of native people — just like birds — in search of their promised land.

Ontiveros said many of the songs have been lost over the years, although a bird-singing revival has occurred in many tribes recently.

Soboba tribe vice-chairwoman Rosemary Morillo said native tribes have held powwows over the years as a way to socialize and share their culture.

Government seeks appeal of Indian trust case

WASHINGTON (AP) — The government has requested an appeal of a judge’s ruling to award American Indian plaintiffs \$455 million in a 12-year-old trust case.

The government’s request to appeal comes two weeks after the plaintiffs signaled they would ask for an appeal of the same decision. U.S. District Judge James Robertson said Aug. 7 that the plaintiffs are entitled to the \$455 million, a fraction of the \$47 billion that they had sought.

The long-running suit claims the Indians were swindled out of billions of

dollars in oil, gas, grazing, timber and other royalties overseen by the Interior Department since 1887.

The government appeal, filed Thursday, contends Robertson’s court does not have the jurisdiction to award the money at all, pointing to his January decision that the task of accounting for the trust money was ultimately impossible.

“If the accounting were indeed impossible, it was not the role of the court to devise an alternate remedy,” the government lawyers wrote.

In 1994, Congress demanded the Interior

Department fulfill an obligation to account for money received and distributed. Two years later, when account statements still had not been reconciled, Elouise Cobell, a member of the Blackfeet Tribe from Montana, joined with others in suing.

Because many of the records have been lost or destroyed, it has since been up to the court to decide how to best estimate how much individual Indians — many of whom are nearing the end of their lives — should be paid, or how the money should be accounted for.

Former Tohono
O’Odham housing
director gets prison

TUCSON (AP) — A former housing director on the Tohono O’Odham Nation who was convicted of stealing more than \$50,000 from the American Indian tribe has been sentenced to a year in prison.

The U.S. attorney’s office says 52-year-old Loren Goldtooth received more than \$34,000 in overtime payments that he wasn’t entitled to and used a tribal credit card to spend

\$17,000 on himself.

The credit card charges went toward 15 trips to Las Vegas and Reno and tickets to rock concerts and a professional baseball game.

Goldtooth was found guilty in May of theft from an American Indian tribe and failure to file tax returns.

In addition to a year in prison, the Tuba City resident was ordered to pay the Tohono O’Odham Nation \$52,239.

At issue in the trial’s most recent phase was how much of the royalty money was withheld from the Indian plaintiffs over the years, and whether it was held in the U.S. treasury at a benefit to the government. Robertson said in his opinion that plaintiffs did not successfully argue that it was.

The plaintiffs argued for more money in their appeal, saying Robertson is too narrowly defining the government’s obligations in managing the Indian trust. The government trust should be treated the same as a private trust, which would have been held to stricter stan-

dards, plaintiffs’ lawyers said.

Robertson originally intended to begin a new phase of the trial that would determine how and to whom the government should award the money. But he said at an August status hearing that he would allow appeals now so the process would not be delayed further.

The class-action suit deals with individual Indians’ lands and covers about 500,000 Indians and their heirs. Several tribes have sued separately, claiming mismanagement of their lands.