

# Sacred Run from California to Washington, DC

by Mark LeBeau

On February 11, 2006 runners and supporters of the *All Life is Sacred Run* gathered on Alcatraz in ceremony and then rallied at DQ-University before beginning the three-month journey to Washington, DC. The run will cover 12 states and many Native nations and communities before arriving at the U.S. capital on Earth Day, April 22, 2006. The run raises awareness of the need to honor and protect the sacred relationship between Mother Earth and all other living things. Runners come from many Native nations, states and foreign countries, including Japan, Ireland and Australia.

Twenty year old Greg Feather Wolfen of the Pit River Nation in California (CA) is one of many Sacred Runners. When asked to share his reasons for running, Feather said, *"I am running for my loved ones and family, and to represent my people and where I come from."* One area of great cultural importance that Feather and many others have been working to protect is the sacred Medicine Lake Highlands in CA.

This natural and sacred place to obtain medicine and healing since time immemorial is in danger of being bulldozed by the Calpine energy company to build geothermal power plants--their proposed projects are currently supported by Bureau of Land Management and Forest Service. The situation at Medicine Lake will probably enter Feather's mind and prayers often while on the run. Last month Feather was one of over 250 sacred site protection advocates that participated in a protest against Calpine at the company's headquarters in San Jose, CA. In high school Feather won awards in football and wrestling and was known for being an effective team member and leader who possessed stamina, quickness, and strength of mind and body and the ability to stay focused. He is also an exceptional BMX trick rider, which requires great balance and courage. These attributes and other qualities will serve him well on the run.

Feather's family and friends are very proud of him and always wish him well, especially his mom Teresa LeBeau, sister Barbara Wolfen, grandparents Melvin and Gwen Wolfen, father Greg Wolfen and cousins Mark LeBeau, Raymond LeBeau, Viola LeBeau, Radley Davis and Cecilia Silva. The LeBeau Family was pleased to have been able to provide Feather some traveling money, a *Protect Sacred Places* t-shirt and a new pair of NIKE running shoes for his journey and wholeheartedly supports his efforts.

The Sacred Run is organized by Dennis Banks, Nowa Cumig Institute, and many volunteers across the country. Dennis, Anishinabe and born on Leech Lake Indian Reservation in Minnesota, is a Native leader, teacher, lecturer, alcohol and drug counselor, activist, author and co-founder of the American Indian Movement. He has had roles in the movies *War Party*, *Last of the Mohicans*, and *Thunderheart*. He founded Nowa Cumig Institute, which supports Native youth programs and Native communities. Of the Sacred Run Banks notes: *"with*



Picture taken 2/11/06 at the Sacred Run on the Ceremonial Grounds at DQ-University in CA. L-R: Feather Wolfen, Mark LeBeau & Dennis Banks.

*so much violence happening at all levels, and so many killings in Iraq, it's time we look at these events as wake-up calls for all of us to answer. In 1978 we took up the challenge to run for our life and Mother Earth. Now 27 years later we have kept running in different countries to bring awareness to our responsibility to live in harmony with Mother Earth. I can't imagine a time in the future of humankind when we won't have a need to teach future generations about how to care for our environment."*

The Sacred Run has its roots in Native tradition of running, even to the farthest nations and villages, to share knowledge and participate in partnership. Ceremony is always part of the runner's way. Before a runner goes on a journey, a medicine person gives "medicine" to the runner while offering prayers to ensure success.

Sacred Runs have taken place in CA, Alaska, Minnesota, North and South Dakota, Wyoming, Colorado, Arizona, Kansas, Ohio, Indiana, Kentucky, Ireland, Scotland, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Europe, Russia, Japan and other places.

