

Family continues pageant run

Winner of Friday night's Miss Pentiction pageant comes from line of successful contestants

By Okanagan Sunday Staff

The Garcha family's impressive run in the Miss Pentiction pageant will continue at least another year.

Neetu Garcha was crowned the 61st Queen Val Vedette and Miss Congeniality — the first such double-winner — on Friday night in front of a full house at the Cleland Community Theatre.

Catherine Beaumier-Martin, Miss Pentiction School of Dance, and Kaley Wells, Miss Pentiction Firefighters Local 1399, were named the princesses for 2008.

Garcha, who entered the pageant as Miss Ironman, earned her crown on the same night her cousin, Sharan Garcha, passed her princess tiara to her successor.

Two years ago, Neetu's sister, Deepak Garcha, was named Miss Congeniality, and the year before that, another one of her cousins, Gagan Chahal, won the Miss Pentiction title. Queen Val Vedette the 61st had a simple explanation for her family's success in the royalty game.

"I don't know about genetics, but we all put ourselves out there," she said with a grin, adding, "I guess I had a little heads-up, because I had experience seeing all the pageants, and I



JOE FRIES/The Okanagan Sunday

Neetu Garcha was crowned Miss Pentiction Friday night in Pentiction.

had help from all of them."

The 17-year-old Garcha was quick to play down her own crowning from among 10 other entrants.

"Having seen all the pageants, you can usually pick out a top three . . . but this year we had a top 11. All the girls were really strong, so it was truly a shock.

"I didn't sleep last night for more than five minutes," she said Saturday morning before the Peach Festival Grand Parade, the first public event of her reign.

Having graduated from Pentiction Secondary School in June, Garcha has some time on her hands to take up her official duties before heading to Okanagan College in January to study marketing and broadcasting. She eventually wants a career in the media.

"It's going to be a huge time commitment . . . but I'm prepared for it and I made a commitment."

A self-proclaimed field-hockey, ethnic-food and dance enthusiast, Garcha said even in today's world, where traditions are evolving rapidly, the one that surrounds the Miss Pentiction pageant is timeless.

"I think it does have a big importance, because the second I was crowned, I thought, 'Wow, this is Pentiction's centennial year. I'm going to leave a legacy and make a difference in the community.'

"There's a lot of people that want to make a change but can't because they're not known. Now that I'm a known name, I will make a change. I'm not running for president, but I have a role in this community now."

Other winners Friday were:

- Blossom Award: Keira LeFranc, Miss Luminus.
- Krystal Garib Talent Award and Bursary: Melissa Commandeur, Miss Pentiction Lakeside Resort.
- Astral Media Communications Award and Bursary: (tie) Catherine Beaumier-Martin, Miss Pentiction School of Dance; Katelyn Deglow, Miss Lions Club.