

'America is a nation of many peoples'

**YOUTH continued
from front page**

of Cultural Resources Department employees Travis Stewart, Jordan Mercier, Bobby Mercier and Brian Krehbiel, as well as Fisher, performing cultural drumming and singing.

Tribal Elders Steve Bobb Sr. and Alton Butler were part of the Color Guard, bringing in the U.S. flag and eagle staff, respectively. Grand Ronde Honor Guard member and Tribal spouse Richard VanAtta carried in the Grand Ronde flag.

Cow Creek Chairman Michael Rondeau performed the national anthem and Warm Springs Chief Delvis Heath gave the invocation before Speaker of the House Tina Kotek, Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum and Senate Minority Leader Ted Ferrioli welcomed the audience.

"The Senate President and I remain committed to open and collaborative relationships with our nine Tribes," Kotek said. "The theme for today is about tradition and about our children, and given the level of uncertainty in our world today, it's even more important to talk about tradition and our children. ... Whether you are a Tribal leader or a legislative leader, ensuring our future by supporting our children is absolutely essential."

"America is a nation of many peoples," Ferrioli said. "Oregon is one people made of many nations. I am grateful and proud and glad that the young people of the Tribes are here to listen to the assertion of Tribal sovereignty and the respect we cherish in our government-to-government relations."

Tribal leaders from each of Oregon's nine federally recognized Tribes then explained how their sovereign nations teach their children and share traditions.

"I appreciate every one of you and all of you wonderful children for carrying on the traditions of our people," Kennedy said after the children performed. "Thank you for coming here and recognizing the commitment between the state of Oregon and the Tribes of Oregon. ... We are the people of the treaty of Jan. 22, 1855. It was signed and ratified. We do have seven treaties that were ratified with our Tribe and our people, recognizing them."

Kennedy said that after the Grand Ronde Tribe was restored in 1983, all of the Tribe's treaties were restored as well.

"I believe what we have witnessed here today is an effect by virtue of having our children come to speak the language, to show the songs that we sing, to demonstrate the dances that are done with our people in our plankhouses under the leadership of many great members of our Tribe. Our people have invested in our culture and we know it is the strength and backbone of our people."



Photos by Michelle Alaimo

Tribal Council Vice Chair Cheryle A. Kennedy speaks about the Tribe's Youth Council during the Legislative Commission on Indian Services/Nine Tribes Spring Celebration held at the State Capitol in Salem on Thursday, May 18. Next to her are Youth Council members, from left, Secretary Isabelle Grout, Madalyn Volz, Izaiah Fisher, Vice Chair Raven Harmon and Chair Payton Smith. At left, Gov. Kate Brown signs the proclamation declaring May 20-27, 2017, as American Indian Week in Oregon during the Legislative Commission on Indian Services/Nine Tribes Spring Celebration held at the State Capitol in Salem on Thursday, May 18.



Kennedy said education is the cornerstone of helping Tribal children become who they will be in life.

"We, as parents, are teachers who hold a strong key to making sure that our children are learning, that they are in an environment where we support them, that we check on them, that we be with them through their academic endeavors, that we participate in the schools and that we show that this is very important to them," Kennedy said.

The Spring Celebration concluded with Klamath Tribal Council Chairman Don Gentry performing two songs – "Peace" and "Song for the Children" – on Native American flute before Gov. Kate Brown signed a proclamation making May 20-27 American Indian Week in Oregon.

"I think this Spring Celebration is one of the great gatherings our State Capitol gets to host every year," Brown said. "It is an opportunity for all Oregonians to honor and celebrate the nine Tribal Nations who have called this place home since long before there was an Oregon."

"I am so moved by this year's theme. By sharing these sacred traditions, we are building a more just and more vibrant future for our children."

The Grand Ronde Tribe sponsored and Spirit Mountain Casino staff served a lunch of baked salmon, baron of beef, pasta salad and kale crunch salad to attendees after the Spring Celebration. The Native American Rehabilitation Association based in Portland also provided Indian fry bread for the famished.

During the morning, Tribal Council Chief of Staff Stacia Hernandez, Public Affairs Administrative As-

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sistant Chelsea Clark and Historic Preservation Manager Briece Edwards staffed an informational table that included Grand Ronde ceded lands maps, copies of *Smoke Signals*, Tribal lapel pins and other information about the Tribe.

In addition to Kennedy, Tribal Council Secretary Jon A. George and Tribal Council members Brenda Tuomi, Chris Mercier, Denise Harvey and Kathleen George attended, as well as General Manager David Fullerton.

Most agreed that the event's highlight was the Grand Ronde Tribal Language Immersion Program children performing dances to two paddle songs and a salmon song, and singing "Tumala."

"I just felt very proud of our programs that we have for our children in teaching them the culture and the language and the dance," Harvey said. "I just had a very happy feeling to see our kids here."

"I was so excited to see them," Jon A. George said. "I was so proud of them. I was looking at them and looking at our Canoe Family now and thinking they are learning now and they are going to grow up and I just picture them advancing and being in the plankhouse as our youth are now."

"I just had the biggest smile," Kathleen George said. "I was thinking about these young ones who will grow up feeling that it is a natural role for them to represent our Tribe. ... I just felt an amazing happiness to watch our young ones representing our Tribe and our Tribes here in

the State Capitol. It's an absolute blessing."

"I thought as they were sitting down on the steps that this soothes my soul to see our youth in the Capitol with all of these adults and getting ready to come out and participate in our culture for our Tribe," Tuomi said.

Other Tribal staff in attendance included Education Department staff members Kathy Cole, Justine Colton, Ali Holsclaw, Santiago Atanacio, Jeff Mercier, Halona Butler, Jade Colton, Zoey Holsclaw and Audra Sherwood, and Youth Council Adviser Shannon Simi.

Students from Cole's Willamina High School Chinuk Wawa class who attended were Andrea Grijalva, Kailiyah Krehbiel, Aspen Wilson, Juan Cortez and Colton Keightley.

Tribal member April Campbell, who works for the state Department of Education, and Tribal lobbyist Justin Martin also attended.

The Spring Celebration was organized by the Legislative Commission on Indian Services, which is managed by Executive Director Karen Quigley.

"We were so honored to have so many young people from so many Oregon Tribes sitting together on the House steps during the program in the Capitol Rotunda, introducing themselves to us and listening to Tribal leaders speak with such pride about them," Quigley said. "Thank you to all the Tribal Youth Council ambassadors and other Tribal youth who made the day so memorable."

"I think this has been a great event," Kennedy, who has been the Grand Ronde Tribe's longtime representative on the Legislative Commission on Indian Services, said. ■