

Tribal Court Offers Many Services

The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde has been growing a lot. While it is difficult to keep up with all the departmental changes, development, and new services, many tribal members aren't even aware a tribal court exists.

Tribal Court was established in 1990 as part of a mechanism designed to uphold the tribal constitution and



Les Marston, Tribal Court Judge

maintain the rights of all tribal members. The court exists separately from state and federal courts, but has limited jurisdiction. Les Marston, Tribal Court Judge and attorney for California Indian Legal Services described the types of cases handled by Tribal Court.

"Under the tribal constitution, the court can review decisions of the Tribal Council to determine if they violate any rights, hear disputes or appeals involving personnel matters, and hear cases involving juvenile or child welfare laws."

Juvenile cases are closed to the public and must involve a child from an Indian home. "It is important for people to know I am not on anyone's side but the child's. During these cases, it is my job to determine what is best for him or her," said Marston.

The Tribe has also been granted the authority to perform marriages, record births, and legally change names. Tribal attorney Michael Mason is working on an ordinance that would allow the Tribe to grant simple divorces to tribal members. This would only apply to divorces where there are no conflicts over children and no land involved.

Dakota Sangretta-Whitecloud, Deputy Court Clerk, recently took advantage of one of the services provided by Tribal Court, and changed her name. "The Court provides convenient services for tribal members at a lower cost," she said. A legal name change through the state costs \$500, while it is a mere \$25 through Tribal Court.

As Deputy Court Clerk, Sangretta-Whitecloud knows how many cases the Tribe has, and feels more people should use them. "Tribal members need to recognize all the services that are available, especially, the legal ones. At this point, it could only make the court stronger."

As the Tribe continues to grow and expand, Tribal Court is expected to do the same. Many would like to see the location moved from the main offices to ensure privacy and minimize disruptions.

Jackie Whisler, Tribal Court Clerk, is responsible for taking calls for cases, filing petitions, and calling the

NOVEMBER MEALSITE MENU

TUESDAY, NOV. 3 Polish Sausage Scalloped Potatoes Buttered Corn Celery Sticks Chocolate Cake	WEDNESDAY, NOV. 4 Clam Fritters Creamed Peas Sliced Tomatoes Lemon Bars Bread & Butter	THURSDAY, NOV. 5 Hamburger/Macaroni Casserole Tossed Salad Fresh Fruit Bread & Butter	
TUESDAY, NOV. 10 Spanish Rice Green Peas Cauliflower Coconut Cream Pudding Bread and Butter	WEDNESDAY, NOV. 11 Seafood Salad Cup O' Soup--Cook's Choice Toasted French Bread Pears	THURSDAY, NOV. 12 Roast Turkey Mashed Potatoes & Gravy Green Beans Pumpkin Pie Bread & Butter	
TUESDAY, NOV. 17 Barley Beef Soup Tossed Salad Dinner Rolls Butterscotch Pudding	WEDNESDAY, NOV. 18 Baked Salmon Buttered Rice Creamed Carrots Celery Sticks Sugar Cookies	THURSDAY, NOV. 19 Dinner Casserole Cole Slaw Chocolate Mousse Pie Bread & Butter	
TUESDAY, NOV. 23 Macaroni & Cheese Stewed Tomatoes Broccoli Oatmeal Cookies	WEDNESDAY, NOV. 24 Oyster Stew Toasted Cheese Sandwiches Tossed Salad Jell-O with Bananas	THURSDAY, NOV. 25 Oven Baked Pork Chops Potatoes & Gravy Mixed Veggies Cake & Ice cream	
Birthdays in November: Thelma Richard, Marjorie Scheese JoAnn Brisbois	Elvina Wheeler Vincent Mercer Frederick McGee Gordon Linton	Norma Lewis Harold Baker Dorothy Ledford Jolene Bean	Roy Langley Carl Gregg Clarice Ellison Ila Dowd

cases during court, among other things. She feels expansion in the court system is very likely. For example, if the Tribe began building housing on the reservation, the court may have to adopt a plan to cover legal issues concerning housing. "Council votes on codes, ordinances, and proposals. Whatever they vote to approve could be a new law," she said.

What members of the court seem to stress most is that the court is accessible. "We are literally open twenty-four hours per day," said Les Marston. "There is a mail slot at the tribal offices, and I am always available by phone."

Tribal Court convenes on the third Thursday and Friday of every month, and schedules cases accordingly. There are fees involved, but they can be waived for people who cannot afford them. The court system is accessible to anyone.

The presence of the Tribe's own court helps allow it function as a sovereign nation, that was meant to serve the tribal membership. Said Marston, "The Tribe can govern itself under its own laws. The people have the right of home rule. That's a very powerful tool."



Deputy Court Clerk Dakota Sangretta-Whitecloud, Judge Les Marston, and Court Clerk Jackie Whisler.