

Sande Schmidt memorial highlights her contributions to Native people

The Tribe hosted a memorial dinner in celebration of Sande Schmidt's life on March 29 at the Community Center.

Sande Schmidt, who passed away last December, was a friend of the Grand Ronde Tribe and Native people all over Oregon. An attorney specializing in Indian Law, Sande was instrumental in the Tribe's restoration effort of the early 1980s.

Born in Salem in 1952, Sande Schmidt grew up in Oregon and California, and graduated as valedictorian of her class in 1970. She attended Stanford University where she met her husband, Kelly Smith. They were married in 1974, the day before her college graduation.

Sande was admitted to Hastings College of Law in San Francisco, graduating with a Juris Doctor degree in 1978, as a member of the Thurston Honor Society. Sande and Kelly moved to Bend, Oregon in 1978. Sande took her last term of law school at the University of Oregon in Eugene, it was there that she developed her interest in Indian Law.



She was tribal attorney for the Burns Paiute Tribe from 1979 to 1982 and had a general law practice in Bend from 1981-1982. She joined the Native American Program of Oregon Legal Services (NAPOLS) in January of 1983 and commuted to Portland from Bend for the next three years. She assisted in the restoration of federal tribal status to the Klamath and Grand Ronde tribes and also focused on the Indian Child Welfare Act and on water law.

In 1989 NAPOLS opened an office in Bend, and Sande finally got to live and work at home. She began working part time in 1991, focusing primarily on water law in the Klamath Basin. During her career she was admitted to the Oregon State Supreme Court, the U.S. 9th Circuit Court of Appeals, and the U.S. Supreme Court.

In 1981 Sande began sixteen years of volunteering and legal advocacy for the Central Oregon Battering and Rape Alliance, a woman's crisis service in Bend. After moving her work to Bend, she volunteered for a number of other programs, including the Start Making

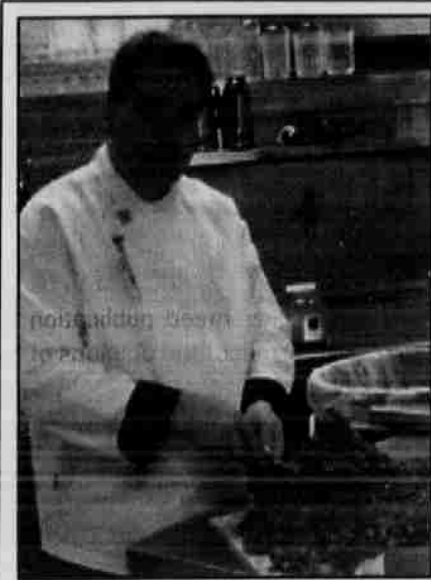
A Reader Today program for elementary school children, the Big Sister program, the Bill Healy Center for Adult Basic Education, the Boys and Girls Club of Bend, and the Reach To Recovery program of the American Cancer Society. She also contributed to the Central Oregon Environmental Center and to Planned Parenthood. Sande was an avid athlete and gardener.

The many family, friends, and colleagues who attended the memorial for Sande included Oregon congresswoman Elizabeth Furse and her husband John Platt, members of the Klamath Tribe, and employees of NAPOLS.

During her life, Sande Schmidt was a mentor to many new attorneys. She affected many young lawyers with her integrity, sensitivity and understanding of legal issues. Because her influence will continue to be felt for many years into the future, NAPOLS has established a scholarship to fund a law clerk position for students interested in Indian Law. For contribution information please call the Native American Program of Oregon Legal Services at (503) 223-9483. The Tribe would like to thank NAPOLS and Kelly Smith for their help in making this celebration of Sande's life such a success.



Rep. Elizabeth Furse (center, to the left of Tribal Chair Kathryn Harrison) with Kelly Smith (far left) and attorneys from NAPOLS. During the service, Kelly read a poem he wrote about Sande in which he referred to her as "the woman who was my life."



Greg Taylor, *Legends* Executive Chef, sculpted the Three Sisters from Belgian chocolate for the service. The Oregon mountains and chocolate were two of Sande's favorite things.

A letter from Don Wharton

There are those who walk among us with dignity and humility, with grace and personal power so compelling that we are moved by their mere presence. Sande Schmidt was not, at first impression, a charismatic person. It was in relationship with her that she revealed her extraordinary strength, wit, intellect, and personal integrity. It was in the fruits of her work that she imparted the mastery of her craft in the law. It was in her uncompromising dedication to pursuing the protection of the rights and goals of Native American people that she reflected her commitment to justice. While Sande reflected these traits in every aspect of her life, it was in the arena of federal Indian law that the attorneys at the Native American Rights Fund best knew her, respected her, and will most miss her.

It is difficult to know what to say about a fallen colleague. What can be said about Sande as an attorney is that she was an able and worthy advocate. She personified the highest, most noble qualities that can attend the practice of law. She was, without exception, uncommonly well prepared and knowledgeable about her client's legal interests. But more than that, she understood her client's needs and goals. She understood them because she listened. She was so successful because she refused to substitute her own agenda for that of her client.

Sande never assumed that she knew better than her client what was best. Rather, she dedicated her considerable skills to accomplishing the seemingly impossible. Her work required her to seek to reconcile the goals of tribal governments which she represented with those of rural and often conservative non-Indian governments with whom her clients were forced to deal. Sande's ability to change the hearts and minds of representatives of those governments seemed, from our distant perspective, almost mystical. But whether Sande was magic or just a hard worker we all witnessed the often unlikely result of non-Indian legislators translating tribal goals into history changing legislation. She moved legal mountains and she did it with grace, with humility, with unflinching integrity, and with boundless energy that will continue to inspire all who were fortunate enough to have been touched by this remarkable woman.

One of our own is gone and we are at once diminished by her passing, and enriched by her time with us.

Don Wharton
Native American Rights Fund

Don Wharton and Sande Schmidt worked together at NAPOLS during the Tribe's restoration effort.