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SMOKE SIGNALS

"The events of today — the history of tomorrow."

Council briefs Congress in Washington, D.C.

Recently representatives from the Grand Ronde Tribe and the Warm Springs Tribe met with House members and Congressional aides at the nation's Capitol in Washington, D.C. The purpose of this session was to educate the Northwest Congressional delegation on Federal Indian Law and tribal issues — after all they are the people responsible for passing the bills that affect many. Congresswoman Elizabeth Furse led the briefing with general Northwest Indian history. Following Elizabeth, Tribal Chair Kathryn Harrison gave a heartfelt testimony of Grand Ronde history from "Trail of Tears" to Termination, from Restoration to present times. Also speaking were Rudy Clements and Dennis Karnopp, from Warm Springs.

Grand Ronde Tribal Attorney, Michael Mason, concluded with a summary of current tribal issues which include Public Law 280 and Federal Trust Responsibility. Public Law 280, the primary jurisdictional statue affecting Oregon's Indian Country, gave Oregon authority over crimes or disputes involving Indians on reservations and trust lands.

The Trust Responsibility applies to Indian land and resources. Title to these lands is held by the United States in trust for the benefit of the Tribe, which means only the U.S. can authorize transfer of the land because the U.S. is the legal owner with the Tribe being the beneficiary. After Termination, the U.S. sold tribal land with the exception of a seven-acre cemetery. During Restoration some of the reservation was restored, meaning the Tribe now has control over that land and the U.S. has a duty to protect it.

Other issues noted to watch for in the upcoming year are the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act amendments, restrictions on trust land acquisition, and Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) amendments.

Overall, it was a successful briefing and the Tribe definitely plans to keep in touch with Congress on all current issues. Also present from Grand Ronde were Tribal Council members Ed Pearsall and Leon "Chip" Tom; and tribal member Justin Martin, who works for the Tribe on intergovernmental affairs.

A few months ago Congresswoman Elizabeth Furse saw the need to educate Congress on Indian Law, so she invited Tribal Council to do a briefing in Washington, D.C. Elizabeth, a long time supporter and friend of the Tribe, warmly accepts a gift from Tribal Chair Kathryn Harrison.

Governor proclaims Native American week in Oregon

Oregon Governor John Kitzhaber issued a proclamation declaring American Indian Week in Oregon to be May 18-24 at a special signing ceremony at the State Capitol building in Salem on May 22. The ceremony was followed by a day of Native American activities, food, and traditional dancing. The Tribes in Oregon had information booths set up throughout Tribal Awareness Day and children from seven different school districts in Oregon visited to learn more about Oregon's Native peoples.

Governor Kitzhaber is establishing a government-to-government relationship with Oregon tribes, and has set up special committees to meet with tribal leaders during the next year. The following is a reprint of the proclamation he signed.

***WHEREAS**: This once abundant land has provided a home for families of native people for more than 10,000 years; and*

***WHEREAS**: Throughout those passing centuries, the Indians have lived in harmony with their environment and made wise use of the bounties provided by Mother Earth; and*

***WHEREAS**: Through sharing and sacrifice, our American Indian citizens have marked the path for thoughtful use of these fragile gifts of nature; and*

***WHEREAS**: The Indian reverence for our planet and all of its creatures, serves as both inspiration and admonition in our stewardship of these lands.*

NOW,

***THEREFORE**, I, John A. Kitzhaber, Governor of the State of Oregon, hereby proclaim May 18-24 to be American Indian Week in Oregon in recognition of the ongoing material, spiritual, and conceptual contributions Oregon's Indian people make to our state.*

***IN WITNESS WHEREOF**, I hereunto set my hand and cause the Great Seal of the State of Oregon to be affixed. Done at the Capitol in the City of Salem in the State of Oregon on this day, May 22, 1997.*

John A. Kitzhaber, Governor

Right: Governor Kitzhaber holds the official proclamation declaring American Indian Week in Oregon.

Below: Representatives of the Tribe, including members of Council and the Tribal Attorney, met with Oregon's Speaker of the House, Lynn Lundquist on Tribal Awareness Day.

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