

The Indian center of the university

■ Spirit Mountain Community Fund's latest grant bolsters Native PSU students by helping to build Native American Center.

By Oscar Johnson

The Grand Ronde Tribe gave \$250,000 to Portland State University to aid in constructing the school's future Native American Center.

The grant came from the Tribe's Spirit Mountain Community Fund which shares six percent of Spirit Mountain Casino's annual profits with a variety of non-profit organizations.

The Fund's most recent grant is part of about \$1 million that currently make up 42 percent of projected cost for the center to get off the drawing board and onto Portland State's campus.

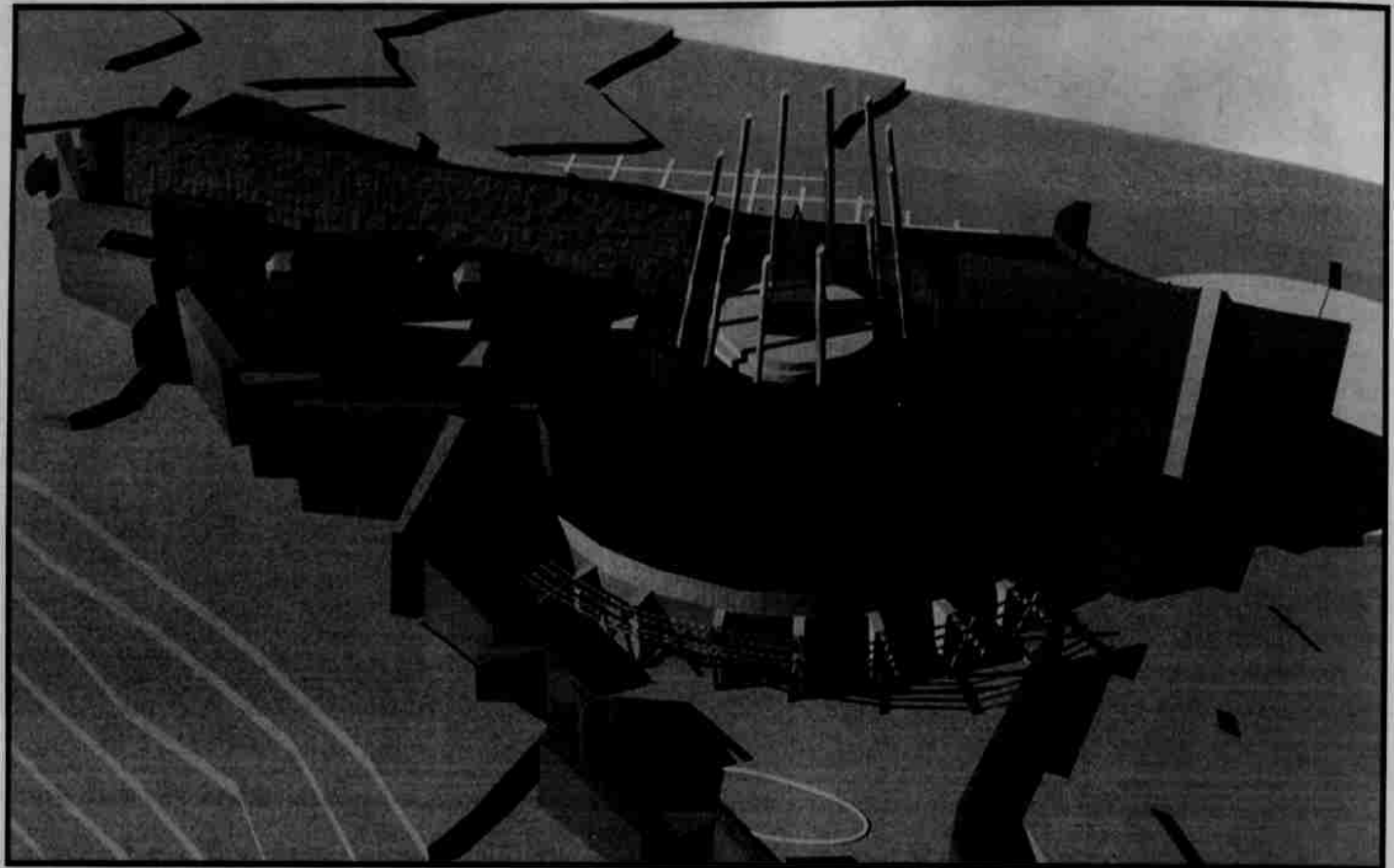
When completed the center will serve as a community resource center and meeting place for PSU students.

Classes, lectures, workshops and conferences relevant to Native American cultures will also find a home at the new site.

"Native American students are more likely to succeed in an environment that recognizes their culture," said Daniel Bernstine, Portland State president. He added that the center will also be "an opportunity to expand the general community's understanding of Native American culture."

"This means a great deal to our students and our community," Bernstine said in thanks at the May 11 event set to announce the grant. "In recognition of that fact we will name the center the Grand Ronde West Entry."

The center is also meeting the long-term aspirations and efforts of Na-



The planned Native American Center for Portland State University will be named the Grand Ronde West Entry. The Spirit Mountain Community Fund gave \$250,000 to help this dream of many Native students and faculty become a reality.

tive students and faculty over the years.

William Elk III, PSU student and active member of the school's Ambassador Group, told attendees that as a freshman he joined other Native students in voicing their original quest for a campus Longhouse.

"They said, 'I need a Longhouse at school where I can burn sage and sweet grass; where I can smudge and sing my song,'" recalled Elk, who also spoke of his own culture shock

when he first came to Portland State.

The center is not a Longhouse proper, but Elk and university officials say its unique design embodies the hopes and input of Indian students who have advocated for its construction over the years.

Their hopes and efforts are now coming to fruition.

"It started out as a student idea but now we have had the help of Gov. Vic Atiyeh. We have had Sen. Hatfield and the full support of the ad-

ministration," Elk said.

The group also sought out tribal support.

Over the last several months Elk and fellow students made three presentations to Grand Ronde Tribal Council and also appealed to two other Oregon tribes to help fund the center.

Their efforts finally paid off.

"Now I know it will become a reality by the time I get out of here," he added.

Portland State is centrally located in downtown Portland and confers more degrees annually than any other school in Oregon's university system, according to school officials.

About 15,000 Native Americans reside in the Portland-Metro region and 900 of them are Grand Ronde tribal members.

Samantha Wise, Grand Ronde tribal member and Portland State student, was at the event to thank both the Tribe and fellow members of the University's Native American student group.

She said joining other Native students to get the center on campus has helped her transform from "a shy student who didn't say much to being more involved in the community."

Kathryn Harrison, Grand Ronde tribal chairperson, who was also on hand to accept the many thanks to the Tribe also shared her hopes for the center.

"I look at this not only as a gathering place but something that will encourage our people to become a doctor, a lawyer or an engineer that will go back and help our people," she said.



Taking a moment to pose at the awarding of the Tribe's \$250,000 grant for Portland State University's Native American Center (from left): Chuck Galford, Spirit Mountain Community Fund board member; William Elk III, PSU student; Daniel Bernstine, PSU president; Kathryn Harrison, tribal chair; Vic Atiyeh, former Gov.; Donald Sampson, center campaign chair; and former State Rep. Elizabeth Furse.