



# Tribe's Small Business Department Shatters the Record Books

*"Grand Ronde has always been the highest producer in terms of numbers of people helped, business plans produced and businesses started."*

~ Tom Hampson  
Executive Director of ONABEN



Photo by Justin Phillips

By Justin Phillips

It is one thing everybody wishes for.

There is to be no one better than you. To be the boss of all bosses. The best of the best.

If you are thinking of starting your own small business, the Tribe's Small Business department has all the answers to your questions. Their statistics crush the national average. Being number one is just another day for the Small Business department.

"We started the year in a very big hole," said Tom Hampson, Executive Director of the Oregon Native American Business Entrepreneur Network (ONABEN). "But we did what any troubled business would do. We looked for help from our vendors and customers, for us this means our member Tribes. They delivered." Hampson was hired a year ago to address the organization's funding problems.

Founded in 1991 in Grand Ronde by Mitch Conley, the corporation grew slowly until the last few years when it rapidly expanded its successful business development center model to Tribes in Washington and Northern California.

"ONABEN was funded mostly by federal money, and so it was vulnerable to budget cuts. When they came, it hit hard," said Elaine Moore, the Grand Ronde Tribe's Director of the Small Business Center who also serves as ONABEN's Treasurer. "Key staff members left, the organization was cut to a minimum crew and it looked bad."

The ONABEN Board of Directors stepped in to take control. As volunteers, the board members performed staff functions and loaned Tribal staff until a modest base funding could be reestablished through the Small Business Administration and the State of Oregon.

"The Tribes stayed with us," said Hampson. "They valued the program and they stepped up to the plate and funded the operating costs of the centers. The best example I can give you of why we are still around is the Grand Ronde Tribe.

"Grand Ronde has always been the highest producer in terms of numbers of people helped, business plans produced and businesses started," said Hampson.

The small business counseling and technical assistance programs provided help to over 2,183 clients and entrepreneurs in the Grand Ronde area during 1999 alone. They have created online services to expand their outreach and offer "any-time-anyplace" service to clients.

Hampson praised Moore, Sheila Herber, Perri McDaniel, Doug Hampton and the rest of the department's staff for maintaining a tradition of service and quality.

"These people have taken the ONABEN model and made it work. They not only made their cen-

## Small Business Development

Grand Ronde staff (pictured from left):

Larry Black, Perri McDaniel, Elaine Moore, Sheila Herber, Doug Hampton and Barbara Lake. Not pictured Roland Metzger.

ter work, they help the whole network," said Hampson.

"Grand Ronde has always been the flagship center, and we have learned a lot from them," said Gary George, ONABEN's Board Chair and Manager of the Wildhorse Resort of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation.

"The importance of our mission has been affirmed by our customers, the Tribes, and our contributors," said Hampson.

Hampson points to a recent \$25,000 grant from the Spirit Mountain Community Fund as an example of the confidence people have shown in the enterprise.

"Although we cannot award grants to Tribal programs directly, we are always looking for ways to support the Native American community," said Angela Ellis, Spirit Mountain Community Fund's Advisor. "ONABEN helps Native American people realize their dreams and become self-sufficient, and that is what we are all about."

The core mission of the Small Business department has stayed the same: to help small businesses start, grow, succeed and, in the process, benefit their community.

ONABEN programs have a social as well as an economic purpose. In helping small entrepreneurs start and grow their businesses, they not only benefit the firm but also help create communities and foster economic development. To accomplish their mission, they reach out to segments of the population that have experienced barriers in the marketplace and yet possess great-untapped potential.

ONABEN offers something for each and every small business. They provide entrepreneurial development assistance and they are a voice for small business amid macro-economic changes, globalization of markets, technology, legislative and regulatory developments.

The Small Business Administration Business Information Center at Grand Ronde was among one of the first in the nation and the first Tribal department to create an online presence. Five years ago, they began to build a website to provide information and services electronically. Today they have grown from no businesses served on the Internet to over 250 accesses each week. They expect the number to double in 2001.

## Services:

- Computer Classes
- Business Consulting
- Business Classes
- Business Library
- Access to Office Equipment

■ Elaine Moore ..... 503-879-2478  
Small Business Division Manager

■ Barbara Lake ..... 503-879-2476  
Business Information Center Coordinator

■ Doug Hampton ..... 503-879-2484  
Computer Training Specialist

■ Larry Black ..... 503-879-4582  
Small Business Development Project Specialist

■ Sheila Herber ..... 503-879-2492  
Business Development Specialist I

■ Perri McDaniel ..... 503-879-2487  
Business Development Specialist II

■ Roland Metzger ..... 503-879-2477  
Economic Development Specialist

FAX ..... 503-879-2479

"I have seen our class participants walk in with a sacred dream that they are afraid to share in public, and walk away ten weeks later with more self-confidence and the tools to pursue their dream," said Sheila Herber, the Tribe's Business Development Specialist. "It's inspirational to watch the transition our students go through and their dedication to their dream."

With another new year here, the Tribe's Small Business department is ready to dominate once again. They can help you access your ability to take your dream of starting a small business and determine if you are ready to make that dream a reality.