

A New Day Dawns On Portland State University

■ Sunrise ceremony gives thanks to Mother Earth as new Native American Center is blessed.



Photos by Peta Tinda

Circle of Support — Portland area Natives and supporters stand in a prayer circle at the sunrise blessing ceremony inside Portland State University's new Native American Student and Community Center. The large open communal gathering area is just one of the many features of the building, which will serve as a learning and cultural focal point for the numerous Native students who attend PSU. The center is scheduled to open on October 24.

By Peta Tinda

A sunrise blessing ceremony was held at the Portland State University's new Native American Student and Community Center, which is scheduled to open on October 24.

Darrel Eastman, a Northern Cheyenne and Oglala Native who led the ceremony, said that any time the earth is disturbed it is important to give thanks to Mother Earth and to ask her permission to be there.

"The building needs to be blessed so that all who enter it will be protected in good way," said Eastman, who is on the PSU Native American Student Advisory Committee and Chairman of the Northwest Indian Veterans' Association. "This building represents hope for our Native people that they may come and learn and be provided with a sanctuary."

About 40 people followed Eastman as he walked from room to room, burning a sage smudge and fanning it with an Eagle Feather. Then the people joined hands in a solemn prayer, thanking the Creator.

The student center, which was built with the help of a \$250,000 grant from the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde's Spirit Mountain Community Fund, is located on the PSU campus on the corner of S.W. Broadway and Jackson Street.

It is the only facility of its kind in the greater Portland metropolitan region, which is home to approximately 20,000 Native American and Alaskan Natives.

It will provide a place for community activities, presentations by students and educators, ceremonial and social functions, community outreach programs, and storytelling and art activities.

It also features a large central meeting place, classroom space for students, a collection of contemporary artwork by Native artists, a space for student leadership organizations, a computer and resource room, a children's play area, and an outdoor area that features an open salmon pit, an amphitheater, rooftop garden and a courtyard.

Sylvia Ollgard, a Lumbee Native who attended the ceremony, said she hopes that the center will promote a better understanding of Native people and culture.

"Before, we had no Native American center, no place for students to go," she said.

"We want people to feel welcome when they come here. We want them to feel at home."



Portland State University's Native American Student & Community Center at sunrise.

Letters

Dear *Smoke Signals*,

After enjoying the Grand Ronde Pow-wow this summer, I was delighted to acquire a copy of your paper and see the wonderful special section of pictures. I also take the Siletz paper and they could learn a bit from you. Also, I want to tell you how much we enjoyed the beautiful calendar you published a few years ago. I would like to see this happen again. I still have some of the pictures of the wall in my craft room.

Keep up the good work. The Reservation looks great with all the improvements and the memorial is especially impressive.

The Tribe has come a long way since restoration. Proud of you.

Sincerely,

Dalores Wagnes

Dear *Smoke Signals* newsletter crew and all the people that make the Grand Ronde Tribe,

This letter is to express the appreciation to make it possible to receive *Smoke Signals*. Your *Smoke Signals* crew have put in very informative articles like for instance; how your Tribal Court deals with such matters as a decree changing name or your Tribal Election process.

I am a Native of Alaska and we do have Indian Country in Alaska, however, when Alaska became the 49th state in 1958-59, the federal government gave the civil and criminal jurisdiction that they had over the Natives, to the state government, which is not good, due to it's termination impact on the Natives of Alaska.

I have been studying Indian law, Federal Indian law to be exact and it has been thought provoking and a better insight to how the federal government umpires between Tribal and state government, so to speak.

I personally believe that Indian law is where we need to education our Native peoples in. Pretty much of what I have learned, reflects in the *Smoke Signals* and I am proud to say that the Grand Ronde Tribe is well informed in such matters.

I believe that our own people are better in status to deal with their own instead of outsiders. Again, thank you for sharing *Smoke Signals*. This appreciation goes to all of you that makes the Grand Ronde Tribe and their *Smoke Signals* better.

Grandfather is good, Mother of Earth is good. May both smile at all your Tribal members.

Most sincerely,

Matt Abruska

Florence, Arizona

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