

# Community Center Opens

Photos by Peta Tinda



**Special Guest** — Former Grand Ronde Tribal Chairwoman and respected Tribal Elder Kathryn Harrison cuts the ceremonial ribbon, officially opening the Student and Community Center. The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde's Spirit Mountain Community Fund donated \$250,000 to the building of the center, which will be a place of respect, cultural identity, common ground and a beacon for the 20,000 Native Americans and Alaskan Natives who live in the Portland area.

Gathering Place to the outside. The Gathering Place is a space for celebration and sharing under a prism of glass telegraphing the rhythms

of the day. The building tells many stories; referencing teepees, Columbia River fishing scaffolds, longhouses, mound houses and rolling hills.

"The roof is a sky catcher, reflecting the patterns of the sky with a rooftop garden (eco-roof) that displays native plants and interprets the traditional ways that individual species play a role in Native life. The culmination of the procession up the roof is the place of

honor where graduates will be forever recognized for their achievement."

The stairs up to the rooftop courtyard start outside the Civic Side with a succession of turns and risers taking one up to the facility's high point above the Gathering Place. Stairs down

from there emerge just off the Gathering Place to complete the circle. Within are a scattering of artworks from the likes of Lillian Pitt (Warm Springs/Yakama) and Jim Jackson (Klamath) although more are coming, \$500,000 worth in all.

In addition, from a kitchen off the Gathering Place volunteers served up fry bread and other appetizers for visitors who also were invited to a salmon dinner set up in the parking lot across the street.

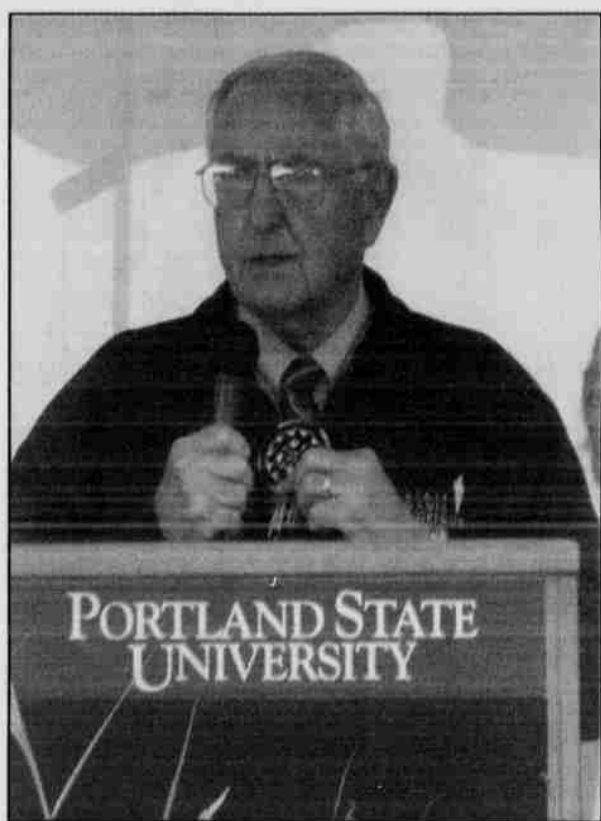
"Indians started flocking here for the (Native Studies) program when it was in a little house," said Tom Ball. "Now we have this beautiful new center. We're hoping that Indian people will continue to come here." The school enrolls some 250 Indian students from a Native population of some 14,000 in the Portland area.

Many Tribal members and Tribal Education employees attended. Tribal youth Eric Sabin came "to be involved in Tribal activities," and Tribal youth Nathan Mueller said, "I like getting involved in all the Native American stuff."

Tribal member Ashley Tuomi, now a PSU student and former coordinator of the United Indian Students of Higher Education, was part of a team of students who introduced State Senator Ben Westlund.

The Office of Indian Education in the federal Education Department announced a two-year \$400,000 grant to the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde during the opening. The Special Projects Demonstration grant for Indian Children will enable high school students to teach

math and science to elementary school students in the Native language, according to director Victoria Vasques. ■



**Restoration Governor** — Former Oregon Governor Victor Atiyeh, the Governor in 1983 when Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde was restored, has always been a vocal and active supporter of the Tribe and its efforts towards self-sufficiency. Atiyeh spoke to the crowd gathered at PSU for the opening of the Native American Student and Community Center.