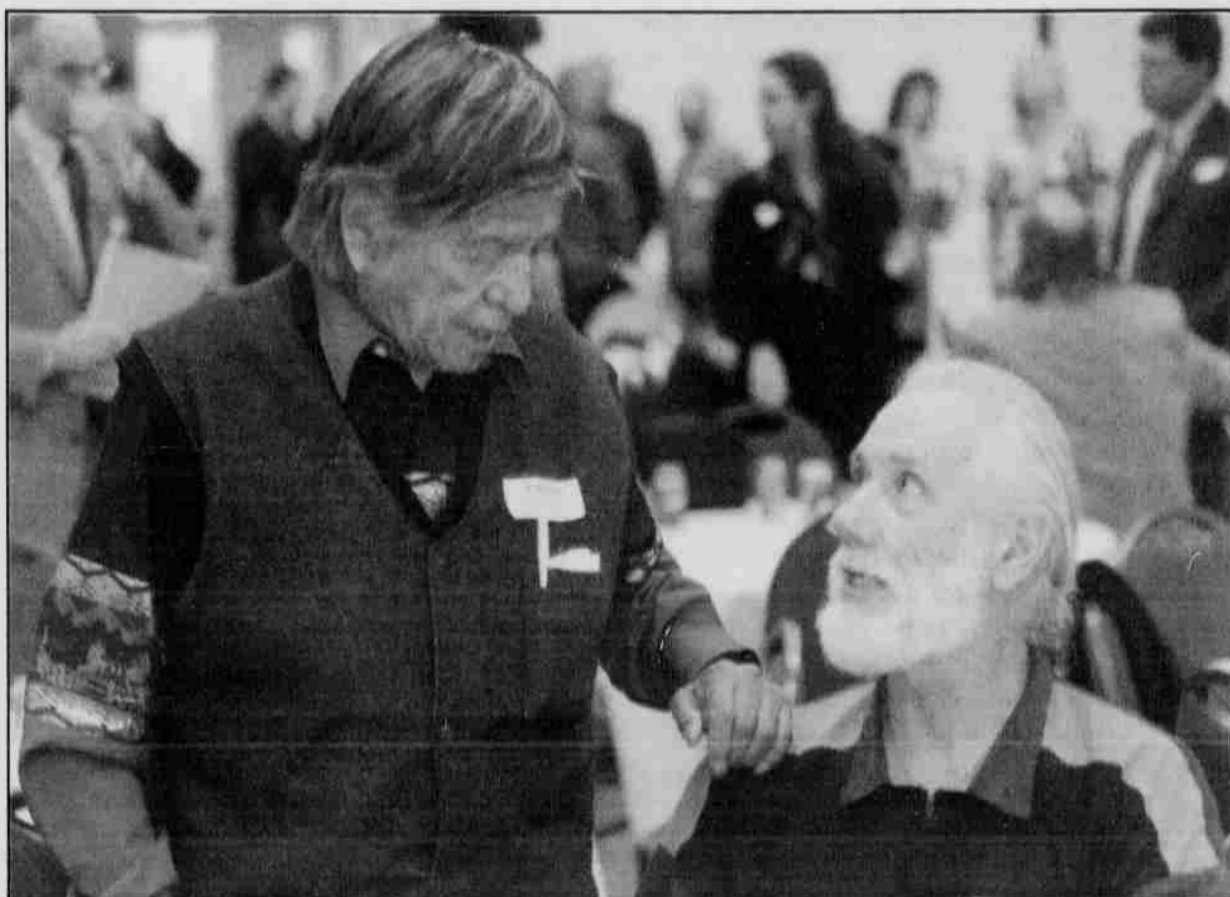


Summit Brings Leaders Together

held at the sixth annual event

Photos by Peta Tinda



Conference — A break in the summit gave Umatilla Tribal leader Jay Minthorn (left) and Grand Ronde Tribal Council member Jan D. Reibach a chance to talk. One purpose of the summit is to make just this kind of informal meeting possible.

patients, an organic cranberry project and like the Cow Creeks, the Coquilles have invested in rural communications. It is the largest bandwidth provider in the county, said Scott.

While acknowledging that the successes have been impressive, Grand Ronde Tribal Director of Program Operations Chris Leno said that he had been looking for more conversation about process, about making economic development work, rather than mere descriptions of the successes.

In the Cultural session, Siletz Cultural Resources Director Robert Kentta spoke about the challenge of educating youth "to maintain our unique identity."

Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs Government Affairs and Planning Director Louie Pitt described his frustration with the "symbolism" of associating Indians with picking berries or dealing with fish and habitat. "It's not just symbolic," he said. "It's not just a special product," he explained afterwards, "but a special product that has a legal standing."

"We have to start thinking about these things more serious," he said. "The real problem is: who are we as Indians? Are we continually going to make a feast out of scraps or are we going to make real food instead of scraps?"

"I really appreciated the participation from the Terminated Tribes — Siletz, Klamath and Coquille," said Tribal member Barbara Lake, who is Executive Assistant to Grand Ronde General Manager Cliff Adams. She referred to comments of Klamath Tribes Natural Resources Director Elwood Miller, that Tribes and Indian peoples have evolved. The challenge, he said, is "getting people to see that, and not put us back into an ancient box."

"We're getting back to our ancient culture," said Lake, "and yet we've evolved. (Combining the two) is my personal struggle."

Tribal member Jan Michael "Looking Wolf" Reibach performed on his flute during the luncheon, and was followed by remarks from Senate President Peter Courtney and Bobbie Conner, Executive Director of the Tamastlikt Cultural Institute, a project of the Umatillas. (See sidebar)

Following lunch, one attendee noted a difference between holding the summit in a building at Oregon State University versus having a casino host the event, as has often been done in the past. "More people come back after lunch," she said.

Governor Kulongoski had surveyed the room as he started his speech. "This state is a mini-United Nations," he said. ■

Setting The Record Straight... Again

Tamastlikt Cultural Institute Executive Director Bobbie Conner told the Lewis & Clark story from an Indian perspective at the recent Government-to-Government Summit in Corvallis.

Conner's talk, "What Lewis & Clark Might Have Encountered Upon Arrival in What We Now Call Oregon," continued the longstanding many-Tribal effort "to set the record straight."

"When (Lewis & Clark) entered the mid-Columbia region, most Tribes had been conducting international trade for at least 70 years," she said.

"What Lewis & Clark did not comprehend is that they had entered a complex, rich homeland. The story, then as now, is about land. It is important to recognize that what Lewis & Clark were doing was completing a record to create further incursions into our homeland, given us by the Creator."

"They did not arrive in the wilderness with the wooley mammoths," she said, "but they came among people with law and food preservation and architecture."

In describing one of the smallest things that Indians had to offer, but withheld, Conner said that a plague of bugs found their ways into the explorers' clothing and bedding and bit them unremittingly and incessantly.

"Had the Chinookan people liked them better, they would have advised them about wearing cedar," she said.

"Without our people, they would not have made it to the ocean or back," she said.

She defined the Indian lifestyle — belittled by the explorers as savage — with concepts the explorers certainly might have recognized: division of labor, fish taken from the river by the thousands, handsome men, people with lean and nutritious diets (while the explorers described a diet for themselves including nine pounds of meat a day), veneration we held for our Elders, unafraid of new commerce and new trade opportunities, and many forms of gambling to help redistribute wealth.

"Lewis and Clark," she said, "simply represented a new trade opportunity for our people. When state officials visit, we still do this. We have a tremendous hospitality tradition."

"We took slaves then," she said, "but slaves could become leaders when they showed their abilities. They could rise to become a leader."

"The Creator gave us a place to live as he gave everybody a place to live. Why would he give it away a second time? What did they do with the land given them?" she asked.

"We are still here," she said, "despite what school children may or may not learn."

"We want the nation to recognize our contributions, to do what it has promised to do, to protect the land that the Creator gave us."

"Tribal histories are thousands of years old," she concluded. "There is much to be learned from our history, if you are willing to listen."