

## Secretary Of State's Office Helps The Rez Vote

■ Frank Garcia Jr. and company provide the Tribe with information and resources to get out the vote.

By Ron Karten

The hanging chad has been re-born this year into a federal program to get out the vote, and make every vote count.

"We want to restore credibility to the electoral process," said Frank Garcia Jr., Manager of the Oregon branch of the Help America Vote Act (HAVA), during a recent visit to the Tribe. HAVA is housed in the office of Oregon's Secretary of State.

The multi-faceted program aims to reach those who have not in the past cared to vote as well as those who in the past have been unable to vote because of a disability or because voting apparatus was inaccessible to them.

For people with disabilities, "independence and privacy is the goal," said Garcia. "We want to do away with (the need for) a companion."



**Tribal Vote** — Tribal Council Administrative Assistant Lauri Smith, left, listens as Frank Garcia Jr., center, and Gene A. Newton describe some of the materials that the Oregon Secretary of State's office has prepared to help the Tribe get out the vote.

In that regard, HAVA is insuring that voice-activated systems are available so those with handicaps can vote on their own. Materials also have been produced for Spanish speakers.

Garcia and HAVA Education,

Outreach and Training Coordinator Gene A. Newton dropped a wealth of materials for the Tribe to use to Tribal Council Administrative Assistant Lauri Smith, who has been heading up Get-Out-The-Vote efforts for the council. Among

the materials were posters, pens, stickers, large print voter's guides and maybe most important, a toll-free question line.

Tribal members can ask any question, whether about registration or where to drop off ballots, by calling 866-673-8683 or for the hearing impaired who use a teletype machine: 866-350-0596.

The Voter's Pamphlet has been produced in alternate forms this year, including an audio CD and streaming MP3 files for those who use the computer, as well as the large print version.

The effort already is bearing fruit, said Garcia. Voter registration is "through the roof, at it's highest level ever."

The effort also will include 30 billboards throughout the state.

"Get your voice out there and make a difference," said Garcia. ■

Photo by Toby McClary

## Tribal Member Review Board Gets Down To Work

■ Three to five Tribal members are needed to watch over each case. The Review Board slate starts out with four members.

By Ron Karten

Part of the training for the new Tribal Member Review Board includes participating in a mock hearing. In the case of the first four members — Patty Tom Martin, Sharon Hanson, Debby Larsen and Joann Mercier — they heard a case that Tribal Judge Katharine English had previously decided.

They studied the case, listened and asked questions of ICW and Tribal representatives posing as parents and lawyers. "It was amazing that we came to the same conclusion that the judge did," said Hanson.

Hanson's family has a long history of taking care of foster children — as many as 25 over the years. When she saw the advertisement seeking participants, she said, "it was a project dear to my heart."

"I've always been interested in foster care, myself," said Tribal member Debby Larsen. "This was a way to help. I have had some concerns just by hearsay about foster care, and rather than go by hearsay, I wanted to find out first hand."

And 'finding out' they are. Hanson said she is now in possession of a case file "three inches thick" to go over. The first panel will hear this first case on October 21.

The start of this latest Tribal effort on behalf of Tribal wards of the Court came in January, 2003 with an Indian Child Welfare (ICW) or-

dinance requiring the Review Board. The process of gaining Tribal Council approval, writing a Tribal ordinance along with policies and procedures for the board took until earlier this year to complete. The first ads for Review Board members were posted in May.

To have a look at the ordinance, go to the Tribe's homepage at [www.grandronde.org](http://www.grandronde.org) or just click on the Tribal logo on the start page

for the internet. Click on 'Tribal Online Documents.' Click on 'Indian Child Welfare Ordinance.' Then go to page 41(e): 'Community Review Boards.'

"It is similar to the state's Community Review Board process," said Tribal member and Tribal Court Administrator An-

gela Fasana.

The idea is to have fresh Tribal hearts and minds providing input to the Tribal Court as it adjudicates the upbringing of children in the court's care.

"It's nice to have more Tribal input," said Fasana. "And it provides an additional cultural component (to the Tribal Court's efforts)."

The Tribe now handles 30 Indian Child Welfare (ICW) cases while 45 Tribal children are currently wards of the court. The goal is to have a slate of Tribal members willing to review cases. The Court is seeking "nine and 12 would even be better,"

according to Stephanie Grim, Tribal Member Review Board Assistant. The Board selects three to five to review each case.

"This is a very exciting development for the Tribe," said Judge English. "We are hopeful that other volunteers will want to do this important work."

Applicants must be 21 years of age, preferably a Tribal member, and a resident of the Tribe's six county service area. And "...to the extent practicable," the ordinance says, "have special knowledge,

background and/or experience in one or more of the following: parenting or foster care taking; Tribal custom, tradition; law; medicine; psychology; social work; or education." In addition, as part of the application, all applicants undergo a background check.

"It put me back into the thinking that there's a lot of problems with children that you don't really think about until you get back into it," said Hanson. "And you realize that a lot of those people are struggling with a whole lot of issues." ■



Stephanie Grim

Photo by Peta Tinda

### "SERVING OUR TRIBAL CHILDREN" VOLUNTEER MEMBERS WANTED

The Tribal Member Review Board needs YOU as a volunteer serving our Tribal Children. YOU could be the one to make a difference for our children's future by completing this and returning it today to: Tribal Member Review Board, 9615 Grand Ronde Road, Grand Ronde, Oregon 97347.

For additional information, call 503-879-2303 or 503-879-1367.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Please Print

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Street/PO Box

\_\_\_\_\_  
City, State, Zip Code

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone Number