

# Tribes Break Ground At Chemawa Station

■ Grand Ronde and Siletz will team up to establish Keizer business park.



Photos by Toby McClary

**Diamonds From Dust** — Grand Ronde Tribal Chairwoman Cheryle Kennedy (second from right) joins Siletz Chairwoman Dolores Pigsley (sixth from left), Keizer Mayor Lore Christopher (fourth from right) and other elected officials and staffers to turn over the first mounds of dirt at the June 15 ground breaking. This ceremonial event started of the building phase of the 15-acre multi-use project that will one day be part of a larger development: "The Gateway to Keizer."

**By Ron Karten**

Something really had to be done with this 15.7-acre parcel. On Wednesday, June 15, when the Tribes of Grand Ronde and Siletz met down the block from the Chemawa Indian School with the mayor of Keizer and staffers and guests from all three to break ground for an upcoming development, everybody had to park in ruts so big that the blackberry vines looked inviting. That is all going to change now.

With the application of nine gold-painted shovels hitting the earth at once, the ground was broken for 110,000 square feet of retail, restaurant, professional office, light

industrial and even flexible space, depending on how the market develops, and the Tribes were officially on the way to turning the land into a productive (and rut-free) development.

"A time of celebration," is how Cheryle Kennedy, Grand Ronde Tribal Chairwoman described the moment.

Siletz Chairwoman Dolores Pigsley saw it as a benefit for the community and the Chemawa Indian School. "It is going to create jobs," she said.

Pigsley started school at Chemawa in 1945, she said, and

now lives within a mile of the coming development. It will be part of a larger, 237-acre project going up simultaneously across the street. Once completed, it will be known as "The Gateway to Keizer."

The larger project will include a transportation center, possibly featuring a commuter rail transit station taking advantage of the Burlington Northern tracks running by. An entertainment and sports center will include the existing Keizer Stadium, home to the minor league Keizer Volcanoes baseball team. The Grand Rondes were a major sponsor of the team

last year.

The field used to be a play area for Keizer Mayor Lore Christopher. "Pretty soon," she said, "it's going to be a playground again."

She thanked the Tribes "for being such wonderful partners."

The plans have been nearly four years in the making, said Kennedy.

When all is said and done, this 15-acre parcel might well hold the larger development's landmark, a 500,000 gallon elevated water tank, planned for the southern tip. It will provide fire safety for the development and will be a gift from the Tribes to the city, said Grand Ronde Tribal Engineer Eric Scott.

He expected that the contract for building the infrastructure will be awarded in July, and that most of the infrastructure would be completed by October.

No timetable or final plans have yet been set for final development of the project, said Scott, but ideas — like a museum or interpretive center — have been circulating.

Robert Kentta, Siletz Cultural Specialist, liked that idea. "A lot of people believe that the Kalapooians are extinct," he said. "It's changing slowly; ever so slowly. And this is a good opportunity to talk about federal Indian policy and Indian schools."

This 15-acre site was originally part of the Chemawa Indian School property. Early in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, it was transferred to the Federal Highway Administration for construction of I-5 and the Salem Parkway. After the highways were completed, the remaining property was deemed surplus and in 2002, it was transferred to the two Tribes. For both, the area is part of their aboriginal territory.



**"It Will Look Like This"** — Tribal Engineer Eric Scott describes the location of the buildings.