

Governor Walks Out On Tribes; Tribes Walk Out On The Summit

SUMMIT continued from front page

"I would imagine that it would have been appropriate for the governor to stay through the entire presentation," said Umatilla Tribal member and Executive Director Don Sampson, whose Tribe stayed when others left. "I understand he's busy but so are all of these folks."

"We have students here," said Sampson. They had come all the way from Pendleton for the meeting. "(They) want to share their successes with other Tribes."

The Grand Rondes' decision was made, said Blackwell, "in conference with our executives who were present and with several other Tribes."

Asked what the move might mean for state-Grand Ronde relations,

Blackwell said, "I hope that it means the Governor will take us seriously in the future, and recognize that government-to-government means government-to-government."

"The Governor was there for the majority of the day," said Anna Richter Taylor, his spokeswoman, "and he believes it was a great opportunity to exchange information, to maintain relationships and establish new relationships between the state and the nine Tribes."

The Tribes didn't know it but, at the same time that the Governor left his agency heads and members of his personal staff behind, he had already planned to be elsewhere in the afternoon.

The Governor left before lunch for a meeting with Wilma Mankiller, the University of Oregon's Wayne Morse Chair for 2005-06 (See *Smoke Signals*, 10/15/05 issue), said Taylor, the governor's spokeswoman, followed by "a meeting with the Attorney General on a legal issue, and then he had another speaking engagement at the Portland Art Museum about the importance of preserving of Oregon culture and history."

"It would have been nice if he had stayed for the whole meeting," said Wanda Johnson, Vice Chair of the Burns Paiute Tribe which stayed through the day. Burns Paiute Tribal representatives were off in a side meeting that stretched to 2:30 that afternoon, said Johnson, and did not even know that others had left.

"When I did come back, I was aware of a lot of empty seats," she said.

When Warm Springs Director of Enterprise Development for the Tribe's Business and Economic Development division Sal Sahme left at 2:30, he said that only about 20 people remained in the hall. While some Warm Springs staffers had stayed, Warm Springs

Chairman Ron Suppah had left early, also because the governor had left.

"With the governor leaving," said Sahme, "it was a statement in and of itself. We certainly recognize on one hand that Tribal Chairmen and the governor are very busy people, but the seriousness of the relationship and policy should be on the forefront of everyone's agenda."

The format of the event, new this year, was as troubling to Tribal leaders as the fact that the governor left early. A leadership panel consisting of the Governor and Tribal Leaders listened to reports from each of six "cluster" groups that included staffers from both Tribal and State agencies, and then asked questions, but with this being the one time each year when Tribal leaders sit face to face with the Govern-

or and Tribal leaders, but none from the audience. The speaker setup in any case made it very hard for most in the audience to hear the give and take, though when keynote speakers presented, the amplification system worked fine.

At one point, the Governor said that the Education cluster was focusing too much on two- and four-year college programs and not enough on trade programs that also prepare the young for family wage jobs.

The Economic Development cluster described the \$1 billion impact that Tribal casinos have on the state economy, a subject taken up again later by Keynote Speaker Wilma Mankiller.

In Oklahoma, where Mankiller calls home and where she long served as Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation, the

stories are abundant. Education successes cited by the Grand Rondes include *Indians in Oregon Today*, a middle- and high school-level book that has been accepted into the statewide curriculum. A revised statewide Indian Education Plan has been endorsed by Schools Superintendent Susan Castillo, who was scheduled but reportedly broke her foot the day before. A new law adds Tribal libraries to the types of libraries eligible for grants from the State Library.

In addition to the statewide meeting, many Tribes, including the Grand Rondes, meet separately with staffers from the state agencies.

"My key issue," said Grand Ronde Tribal Engineer Eric Scott, "is I wanted the state agencies to accept natural resource mitigation on Tribal

Trust property, in some cases where they don't have jurisdiction." The state agreed during sessions held the day before to consider it under an "explore" partnering opportunities instead of just "promote" opportunities, said Scott.

Such is the special language of bureaucracies, the place where much of the important work gets done, no matter how incremental and

whatever else public speeches endorse.

For Grand Ronde Tribal member and Indian Child Welfare Unit Supervisor Dana Ainam, the state-Tribal partnerships have produced "good progress in child welfare agreements." The Tribal department is now able to access Title IV-E federal funding because of this relationship. The department also has access to state databases as a result.

On public safety issues, however, she said, "we struggle."

Also outstanding as a continuing issue for the Tribes is that "the state has decided to put Tribal members at risk in terms of fish quality," said the Umatillas' Sampson. "Their policies are allowing Natives to be at much greater risk (because of the Department of Environmental Quality's water quality standards). We are disposable and that's acceptable to them."

Early in the conference, Secretary of State Bradbury said, "We share the sacred space. We share a respect for our surroundings. We share a commitment to improving the lives of all Oregonians. We're here to learn how we can better cooperate and collaborate."

"Let's build on the success that we've got," said Warm Springs Sahme. "Let's try to create an incentive for everybody to stay to the end. Otherwise, we fall short of what we're all trying to achieve."

By the time the Grand Rondes and others had left, the sun was out and it was looking like a beautiful day. ■



Top Ten — (L to R) Warm Springs Tribal Chairman Ron Suppah, Klamath Tribal Chairman Allen Foreman, Coquille Tribal Chairman Ed Metcalf, Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Tribal Chairman Ron Brainard, Umatilla Tribal Chairman Antone Minthorn, Burns Paiute Tribal Chairman Dean Adams, Siletz Tribal Chairwoman Dee Pigsley, Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Indians Tribal Chairwoman Sue Schaffer, Oregon Governor Ted Kulongoski and Grand Ronde Tribal Vice-Chair Angie Blackwell.

Photo by Toby McClary

nor, many were hoping for a more direct give and take.

"You can't possibly get down to the meat and potatoes at these meetings," said the Umatillas' Sampson. The Umatillas have been meeting monthly with the governor's staff in recent years, and bi-monthly in the last ten months, he said.

"We call in department heads where we need to. That's our most effective means to get ahead of problems," he said.

But some Tribal leaders thought more could be made of this opportunity.

"It would be nice if he set aside some time for (face-to-face meetings with) the Tribes," said Burns Paiute Vice Chair Wanda Johnson.

"I always feel that the Tribal story should be told first," said Sue Shaffer, Chairwoman of the Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Indians. "Addressing Indian issues is the purpose of these summits. If Tribal leaders spoke first, then (state) agency heads could respond to the problems raised."

"I don't think there should be finger pointing from either side," said Warm Springs' Sahme, "but we should work on a way of creating an environment where there's serious dialogue going on, and some incentive for both the Governor and the Tribal Chairs to stay throughout the meetings. You need to structure it in a way that facilitates that."

The format allowed questions from a permanent panel including the gov-

Tribe put together 15- and 30-second television advertisements with the theme: common values/common ground, to keep the public advised about Tribal contributions to the state economy.

"There's a misperception that Natives don't pay taxes," she said. "And public perception has a direct impact on public policy."

Tribes get very busy counteracting court decisions and legislation that work against Tribal interests, she said, but they should also consider counteracting negative public perceptions.

One area of common ground resulted in a program to cross deputize Native and Oklahoma police officers. With complex and confusing jurisdictions in the state, a lot of time was wasted when crimes were committed just trying to figure out in whose jurisdiction the crime took place.

"One of my fondest memories (of that effort)," she said, "was seeing a red-necked sheriff swearing allegiance to the Cherokee Nation."

The Tribe also forged a cooperative agreement with the state's motor vehicle department to provide separate license plates for Tribal members. The state uses license plate funding for public schools, and the Cherokees have been able to improve funding for public schools with significant Cherokee populations under this plan.

Tribal issues with the state are wide-ranging, and in many areas, success