

State Capital Hosts Tribal Information Day In Salem

By Ron Karten

On Friday, May 19, in Salem, the Governor proclaimed May 19-24 American Indian Week in Oregon.

In the rotunda of the Capitol, politicians and Tribal leaders pressed two themes: healing and communications.

Senate President Peter Courtney (D-Salem) took up the subject of healing, raised earlier by Wasco/Warm Springs Tribal Elder Fred Wallulatum, who offered an opening prayer.

"The thing that makes me so sad is that our state is so divided," said Courtney. But he went on to say that Indians "know about healing."

"We know what our task is: healing healing healing," he said.

The government-to-government process "is working," said Grand Ronde Tribal Council Chairwoman Cheryle Kennedy, on this tenth anniversary of its establishment in Oregon. But she said that "many difficulties and obstacles" were ahead.

"Through dialogue," she said, the Tribes and state would find common ground.

"Through all the struggles and hardships, you still find respect, and still honor one another. To learn from one another, I believe, that is the teaching of our Elders."

"Be very vigilant of Indian hate groups," said Sue Shaffer, Chairman of the Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians. "They're malicious and harmful and they work under the cloak of doing community good."

Dancers from Grand Ronde and the Klamath Tribe performed. The Grand Ronde Honor Guard posted the colors. The Cow Creeks provided the catering.

From the Grand Ronde booth, located upstairs at the capitol, Tribal member and Tribal Tourism Coordinator Elaine LaBonte saw "a lot less people this year. We didn't give away nearly the amount at our booth."



Government-To-Government Communications — Tribal Chairwoman Cheryle Kennedy discussed the importance of inter-Tribal communications in her welcoming speech at Tribal Information Day on Friday, May 19.

The Tribe's focus on "our traditional arts are alive and well," she said. "Last year, we had basket weavers; this year, we demonstrated beading with (Tribal member) CC Kneeland and (her daughter, Tribal member) Nakoosa."

This year's themes were culture and natural resources.

And for LaBonte, the important message the Tribe delivered was this: "We do still practice what we did before."

LaBonte also joined the Grand Ronde Color Guard by carrying the Grand Ronde flag. "To carry in our flag was a tremendous honor," she said.

Although Oregon Secretary of State Bill Bradley read the proclamation in the Governor's absence, he also noted that "thirty five state agencies are receiving training today for working with Oregon's nine federally recognized Tribes."

"Long term vision is a necessity," said Bradley. "We must all work together so that our prosperity lasts across the Seventh Generation."

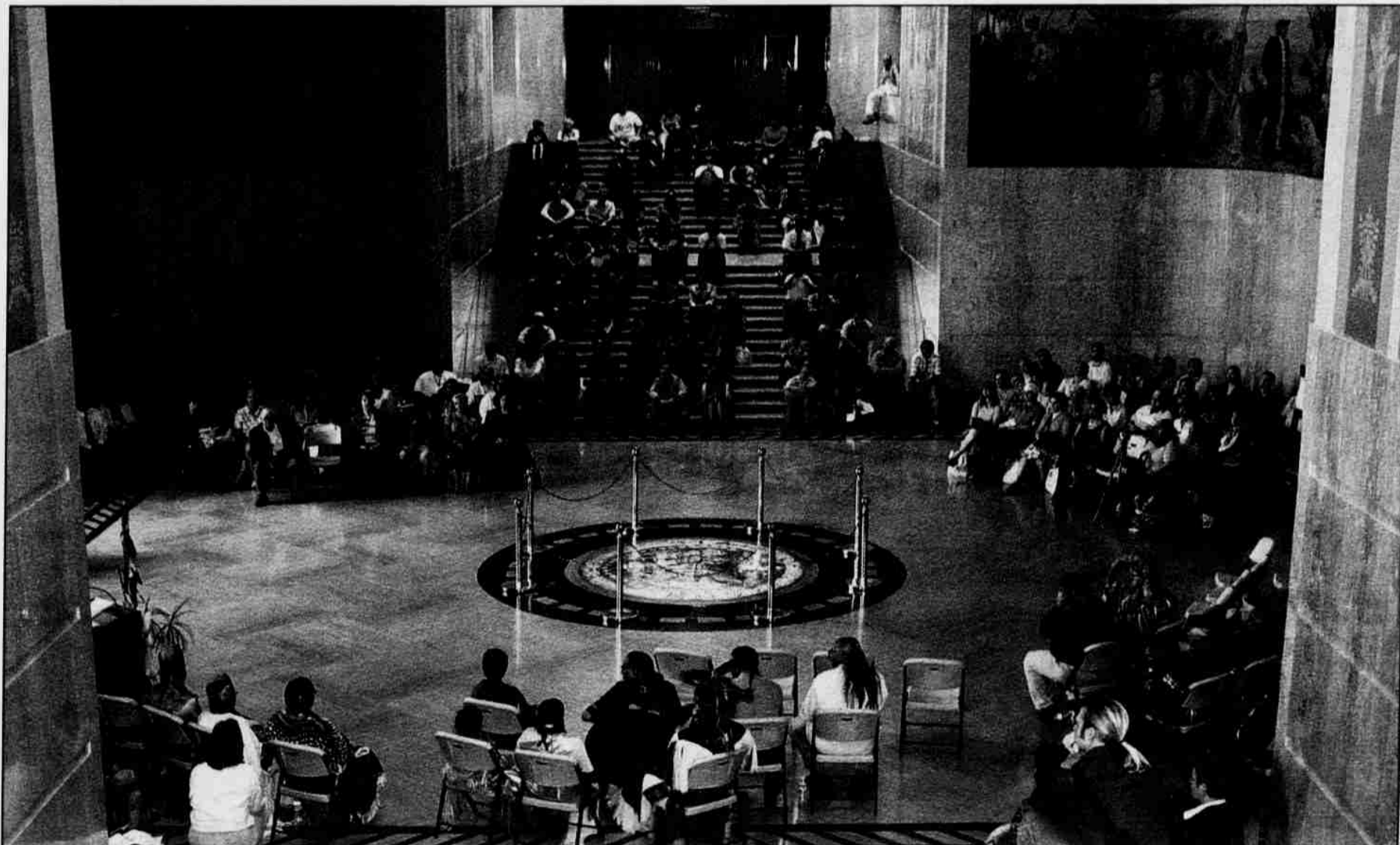
He called the day "a precious opportunity to learn more" about Indians.

"I believe the values of the Government to Government meetings are starting to become part of the culture of State agencies," said Oregon Attorney General Hardy Myers. "I hope the Tribes are coming to understand the culture of government agencies. They cannot do more than the Legislature gives them the power to do."

Back in Grand Ronde, the week was marked at the Spirit Mountain Casino with daily exhibitions of Indian crafts, including basket weaving, beading, leatherworking, dancing and drumming, 20 craft vendors, visits from Tribal Royalty and an all-Tribal arts and crafts show. ■



Burns/Paiute Tribal Elder Vernon Kennedy



All nine Tribes of Oregon were present at the Tribal Information Day held at the State Capital in Salem.

Photos by Toby McClary