



# SMOKE SIGNALS

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UMPQUA

MOLALLA

ROGUE RIVER

KALAPUYA

CHASTA

## Annual State Tribal Government-to-Government Summit A Success

By Siobhan Taylor

The Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Indians hosted the Annual State Tribal Government-to-Government Summit on December 13-14. The conference was held at the Seven Feathers Casino Resort. All of Oregon's federally recognized Tribes participated in the meeting. The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde were represented by Tribal Chairman Chris Mercier, Secretary Jack Giffen, Jr. and council members Val Sheker and Wesley "Buddy" West. Representatives from Grand Ronde departments and programs were also in attendance to attend the breakout sessions and cluster group presentations.

The evening before the summit the Cow Creek Tribe hosted a private dinner for Tribal leaders and the Governor. Chris Mercier attended the dinner and found himself seated beside Governor Kulongoski. Mercier described the dinner as a relaxed and he and the governor engaged in a lively conversation about alternative energy sources. "The governor said we need to reduce our dependence on foreign oil and I told him, Governor, we need to reduce our dependency on all oil."

State/Tribal government to government relations came to the forefront under the administration of Governor John A. Kitzhaber. On May 22, 1996 Kitzhaber signed Executive Order No. EO-96-30 which officially recognized State/Tribal government-to-government relations. After that the 2001 session of the Oregon Legislature passed SB 770 which codified Executive Order 96-30. Under Oregon law state agencies are required to develop and implement policies to include Tribes when state agency policies and programs affect tribal interests. The law also requires certain training, an Annual Summit and an Annual Report to the Governor and the Legislative Commission on Indian Services on state agency interactions with



Tribal Council member Wesley "Buddy" West and Senator Kate Brown during the Annual State Tribal Government-to-Government Summit at the Seven Feathers Casino Resort held on December 13-14.

the Tribes. That's how the whole summit came about.

The Commission on Indian Services (CIS) organizes the annual event. It brings Tribal representatives together with State agencies to discuss advancements, issues and concerns. It also brings sovereign leaders together with the leader of the State of Oregon for dialog. The summit opened with an invocation and presentation of the colors. Council member Wesley "Buddy" West carried in the Grand Ronde Tribal Flag. Then, leaders from each Tribe presented a program. Their direction was to focus on the accomplishments of their Tribe over the past year. Chairman Mercier highlighted the Tribe's accomplishments and emphasized the Tribe's cooperation with state agencies and the governor's office.

In his remarks Mercier noted the Tribe's 23rd anniversary as a restored Tribe and how the Tribe had progressed from a terminated Tribe with little more than a cemetery to the successful thriving Tribal community it is today. He highlighted accomplishments of the Tribe's education, health and wellness and elder programs. And the amazing success of the

Tribe's Spirit Mountain Casino. Mercier even found the opportunity to make a side comment to the governor, thanking him for the new compact that was successfully negotiated and joked that the new, record per capita was no doubt tied into the governor's compact ap-

proval and the expanded number of machines on the casino floor. Later on, the governor acknowledged Chris from the podium and told him he had also contributed to the Cow Creek's economic development by playing some of the casino games the night before.

Mercier emphasized the Grand Ronde Tribe's cooperative work with state and local agencies from Oregon State Parks and the Fort Yamhill project to safety planning with the Oregon Department of Transportation. He also touched on the Tribe's tradition of Potlatch, giving back and noted that the Spirit Mountain Community had given over \$36 million from the Tribe to local charities and would continue to support the community. He reminded the audience that the Tribe's former Chariwoman and a valued Elder of the Grand Ronde Tribe, Kathryn Harrison, constantly reminded the Tribe of the importance of giving back to the community that supported the Tribe. And he told all present the Tribe would continue to honor that commitment as a good community partner. ■

### Elder's Feature

## A Rich Life

■ Tribal Elder Louise Medeiros embraced the work and the fun and the nurturing of every living thing.

By Ron Karten

Three animals come to greet you even before you arrive at Tribal Elder Louise Medeiros's place in the Tribe's Grand Meadows housing development. On a recent autumn day, the pets included two Shiitzus, one called Bucky, 3, and a little 8-week-old baby called, Boss, belonging to neighbor and fellow Tribal Elder Jessie Brann, and a seven-year-old Ragdoll called, Wylie. A Lhapsa Apso called, Buddy, who was 14, did not even pretend to care who was coming until the visit was about over.

Medeiros, meanwhile, was sitting on the porch of her place, welcoming all, man and dog and granddaughter.

(Included in that list is her Tribal member and granddaughter, Dorothy Anderson, 11, who has



Photo courtesy of Louise Medeiros

Tribal Elder Louise Medeiros, left, cousin and Tribal Elder Sharon Hanson, center, and sister, Tribal Elder Marie Davis back in the day.

lived with Medeiros for the past few years.)

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Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde  
Community of Oregon  
9615 Grand Ronde Road  
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