

Grand Ronde Delegation Attends Inaugural Ball

By Siobhan Taylor

Twenty representatives from The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde attended the Inaugural Ball for Oregon Governor Ted Kulongoski. The Ball took place Saturday, January 6 in the Oregon Convention Center.

Members of the Tribal Council who attended the event were Chairman Chris Mercier, Vice Chair Angie Blackwell, and council members Wesley "Buddy" West, Val Sheker, Kathy Tom. They attended with their guests and members of the Tribe's Executive Team. Randy Dugger, General Manager of Spirit Mountain Casino and Lynn Hillman, Executive Gaming Director also attended.

"It's important to remember that while we find ourselves at opposite sides of the debate with the governor on off-reservation gaming, we do believe it is important to work with him, as a sovereign government to cooperate on what's best for Tribal people," said Chairman Mercier. "Our Tribe needs to continue to build bridges at a community level and at a state level. Our attendance at the event is part of that." Mercier mentioned hunting and fishing rights, alternative fuel, education, healthcare and the environment as areas the Tribe needs to work with the Governor and state officials to address.

Legislators, business leaders and Tribal leaders were out in full force. At least 2,000 people packed the ball room. Tribal representatives attended a private reception with



At least 2,000 people attended the Inaugural Ball for Oregon Governor Ted Kulongoski in Portland. Above, a Grand Ronde delegation poses for a picture. At right, Chairman Chris Mercier and guest Sarahjohn.

the Governor prior to the sit-down dinner.

The event was formal attire and the Grand Ronde delegation didn't disappoint. Some members, Mercier and West, looked dapper in their tuxedos. It was most appropriate for their "photo op" with the Governor. ■



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Tribal member Leland Butler, Jr. will again have his face on the billboards. Butler, 12, was recently chosen to do an anti-drug campaign for the Office of National Drug Control Policy. It is a nationwide campaign designed to promote positive alternatives to American Indian teens. The posters, as seen above, will be distributed throughout Indian

Country across the United States.

"I want to end marijuana usage," said Butler. "I was really excited to do this."

Butler's mother, Tribal member and Human Resources Specialist Cindy Watkins, explained that she received an email requesting photos for a Native American boy in an age group that matched her son's.

"We emailed them some photos and they wanted more," said Watkins. "Then we got the call that he had been selected."

Watkins and Butler then scheduled a time to do a photo shoot with Michael Jones of Portland.

"It was really hard," said Butler. "They took over 400 photos of me in my regalia. I was getting frustrated because it was

taking so long. But in the end, it was worth it," he said.

For Butler, who dances traditionally and competes in many sports throughout the year, this was just another walk in the park, or face on a billboard.

"If he wants to try something," said Watkins, "he has never been afraid of doing it."