

2007 ATNI Pushes No



ATNI President Ernie Stensgar (Coeur d'Alene), left, addressed the conference at the Grand Ronde-sponsored Awards Banquet Honoring Elizabeth Furse. Seated from left are Tribal Vice Chair Angie Blackwell, former Grand Ronde Chairwoman Kathryn Harrison, Tribal Elder and former Tribal Council member Margaret Provost and Tribal Council member Cheryle Kennedy.

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no Indian legislators. "We've got to keep at getting people to vote and run," he said.

The end of the five-day conference included agreement on 27 resolutions. One, for example, supported Oregon state efforts to recycle mercury from computers and dental fillings. Another called for Trust reform, seeking approval for federal reforms introduced by Senator John McCain and Byron Dorgan in Senate Bill 1439, the "Indian Trust Reform Act of 2005," though without provisions relating to "the settlement of the Cobell litigation," and including this time "new authority for Tribal management of Tribal trust lands." A

third resolution supported legislation that will allow Tribes to issue tax-exempt bonds.

"We're monitoring a ton of those," said Tribal Elder and Council member Wesley Buddy West who

She has been working on the project at ATNI for four years, she said, and it took her pushing to get it on the agenda this session to keep it alive.

Fort Vancouver is one of many

Mike Burton, head of ATNI's Revolving Loan Fund, is "looking for people who make economic development happen in your community." Activity has been grow-

"We see the value of ATNI because it's specific to the Northwest."

~ Valorie Sheker,
Tribal Council Member

submitted a proposal of his own, Resolution 07-07, seeking federal funding "to support a gathering of traditional and spiritual healers." ATNI supported the resolution. West also moved for approval on the floor of Resolution 07-27, the Trust Reform Strategy mentioned above.

Not all of the action resulted in resolutions, however. Tribal Council member Valorie Sheker helped ATNI's Culture and Elders Committee approve a five-person board to continue work on aspects of Fort Vancouver's redesign as an Indian cemetery.

Indian cemetery and repatriation issues coming up in the Northwest as development continues to uncover new unmarked graves. That will mean the design and development of new cemetery facilities, a big job that may well pay dividends to Indian artisans in the Northwest.

"Within our four states we have so many artisans," said Sheker. "We'll look for members within our Tribes to help us move forward."

And, to give you an idea of how the process works, Sheker noted that she has begun work on a Resolution to create a federal funding source for dealing with new cemetery and repatriation issues.

"It may take 10 years to go through, but it's going to go through," she said.

As the work of ATNI and its Tribes grow, many different kinds of opportunities also are surfacing for Tribal members.

Mary Clare, Ph.D. and Director of Lewis & Clark College's Oregon Center for Inquiry and Social Innovation, put out a call for a Native American Program Coordinator.



Photo by Toby McClary

ing so fast, he said, the fund's size doubled in the last six months.

Native Americans have the ear of John Tester, new Democratic Senator from Montana, said Dennis Worden (Coeur d'Alene), the Hatfield Fellow currently serving in Democratic Portland Congressman David Wu's office. "(Tester) needs staff to work on Indian issues," said Worden.

Worden also provided the group with a general legislative update.

Urban Indian health is on the radar of many legislators, he said, though funding overall is likely to stay at 2006 levels. With the war, there has not been a lot of attention to domestic issues, but the administration will be naming a new Bureau of Indian Affairs leader.

Among bills supported by Congressman Wu, said Worden, is HR 545, that clarifies language in a previous meth fighting bill so that Indians are eligible for funds;



Tribal Council member Wink Soderberg