

Natural Resources Presents At General Council Meeting

■ Enrollment topped concerns expressed by a large Eugene turnout, but Tribal members also asked about health care and housing.

By Ron Karten

Tribal Chair Chris Mercier opened the meeting at the Valley River Inn in Eugene, and Tribal Council member Wesley "Buddy" West offered the invocation.

The Council thanked Leonard Whitelaw II, who last August and in February this year donated many historical documents to the Tribe. The records, from the end of the 1800s and the beginning of the 1900s, reported on supplies made available to the Grand Rondes by the Department of Indian Affairs, the U.S. Indian Service, and agent records.

Whitelaw, who was not present at the meeting, had requested a formal acknowledgement of his gift.

Tribal member Mike Wilson provided the Natural Resources report to the Council. Wilson has worked for the Tribe for 14 years. He recently was named Manager of the Natural Resources Division, a position he has held on an interim basis since 2006.

"I'm honored to serve the Tribe in this position," he said and talked about his family's history in the woods, including grandfather, Dewy Parazoo, who was a logger, and his mother, Joyce Wilson Parazoo, who worked as a fire lookout.

The department's six divisions were busy in 2006, said Wilson. Forty two department employees were "red-carded" (approved) to fight fires last year, and logged 32 hand crew days. Tribal firefighters traveled to the Crow Agency in Montana and to Winnemucca, Nevada to fight fires. They did meadow and prairie restorations, planted 36,600 seedlings including douglas fir and western red cedar in the process of reforesting 84 reservation acres.

Lumber sales amounted to \$2.4 million in 2006, while 17.63 miles of gravel road were graded in support

of that harvest as well as providing general maintenance and care of the road.

"While lumber sales vary from year to year," said Wilson, "the

Tribe remains on track with its cutting plans."

Last year's fish weir project on Agency Creek will allow the Tribe to monitor fish coming up stream, and other projects will allow the department to monitor the travels of deer and elk.

Across the Tribe's ceded lands, the department is involved with 60 projects including work with fish hatcheries, habitat issues, cleanups and restorations, some on federal forest land.

Staffer and Tribal member Shonn Leno offers a hunter safety course. Tribal members and leaders have for a few years been given tours of important historic Indian sites in the Willamette National Forest, and Tribal Chair Chris Mercier said that the Tribe and the Forest staff have agreed to initiate more such tours in the future.

Discussion items included enrollment, health insurance and housing questions.

Amended Tribal enrollment statutes intend to reduce the problem of "split families" (in which one child is a Tribal member and another is not) and are in the middle of a long, bureaucratic process heading toward approval.

"I don't want anybody to think that this will fix the enrollment issue," said Tribal Council member Valorie Sheker. "There are always going to be enrollment issues."

And perhaps the same could be said for Tribal health insurance.

"Tribal (health) insurance is becoming a real frustration," said Tribal member and Eugene Satellite Office Manager Jon Darcy-Chantell.

"We need some help with this," said Barbara LaChance, spouse of Tribal Elder Gene LaChance.

Risk management will be a subject at the upcoming community meetings. For individual help with Tribal

health insurance, contact the Tribe's Risk and Insurance Programs Administrator Allyson Lecatsas, or on the internet, go to: www.hcdirect.net.

Freelance photojournalist Richard Archambault (Standing Rock Sioux) and Lane Community College Instruction and Student Services Associate Vice President Donna Koechig, Ph.D. (Cherokee), updated the Council and Tribal members about the progress of the Lane Community College longhouse. Still about \$250,000 short of the project's total \$1.4 million cost, building phases 1 and 2 are moving forward. Ground broke for the longhouse within a week of this meeting.

The Sweet Home Forest Service district has offered to provide logs for the project and an "Apache woodcutter" with a portable lumber mill has volunteered to cut the logs to size.

The project begins pouring concrete in May and upon completion, it could be the first longhouse at a community college in the nation.

Tribal member Mary Court asked who to thank for the Vietnam Memorial. "I took a Vet there," she said, "and he cried when he saw it."

Tribal members Clifford Olson, Becky Weston, and Tribal Elder Clarice Ellison each won \$50 door prizes; while Tribal member Anne Pichette won the \$100 prize.

Community meetings will begin on Sunday, April 22 at the Embassy Suites Hotel at the Portland Airport. Next up will be Sunday, April 29 at the LaQuinta Hotel in Tacoma, then on Sunday, May 6 at the Community Center in Grand Ronde. On Saturday, May 12, the Tribe will sponsor a community meeting in Eugene at the Columbia Ballroom of the Valley River Inn. And on Sunday, May 20, the last of this year's community meetings will be held at the Riverhouse Resort in Bend. ■



Photo by Ron Karten

Tribal member & Natural Resources Manager Mike Wilson



Photo by Toby McClary

Tribal Elders and staff gathered together with Dr. Diane Pratt (wrapped in Pendleton blanket) at the community center on Thursday, March 29. Dr. Pratt had decided to move back to her home state of New Mexico after four and a half years as Grand Ronde's Clinical Director.