

Governor Charms Grand Ronde

■ Ted Kulongoski also takes on some Tribal-State issues during his visit.

By Ron Karten

On the sunny morning of May 11, Oregon Governor Ted Kulongoski arrived in Grand Ronde with a small entourage of aides. The day included a little business and a little culture.

The Governor first met in private with Tribal Council to discuss an expansion of Tribal hunting and fishing rights.

Lunch included pesto salmon at the Community Center and entertainment by the Tribal pre-school class demonstrating their Chinook Wawa skills.

The Grand Ronde Canoe family, led by Tribal member and cultural language specialist Bobby Mercier, drummed out a welcome for the guests.

With the temperature outside heating up, Mercier and Tribal member Leslie Riggs, a Cultural Education Specialist, wet down their drum skins as part of the drums' summer maintenance.

In Chinook Wawa and English, Mercier welcomed the group. "Thanks for coming out to see our land and talk to our people. Welcome."

"I just want to thank all of you for inviting us out here," said the governor. "I'm always impressed when the young children are here."

Before sitting down to eat, Kulongoski walked around greeting children, staff, adults, and Elders. He was given a basket made by Tribal Elder Sam Henny, and a photo of Henny holding the basket, which was photographed and signed by *Smoke Signals* photo-journalist Toby McClary.

Afterwards, Kulongoski toured the Tribal campus, and had a bunch of questions everywhere he went.

At the Health Clinic, he asked how Tribal members are insured, and if all were eligible. Tribal Council Vice Chair Angie Blackwell told him about the Tribe's self-funded health plan and that all Tribal members are insured under it.

He asked if the money came from the federal Indian Health Service and if the state supplied any money. The



Oregon Governor Ted Kulongoski spoke with Tribal Youth Eddie Larsen.

answer was yes, we do get money from the federal Indian Health Service, but we do not get money from the state.

At the Education Building, he asked how many Tribal members were taking advantage of higher education and child care.

In the Tribal library, Tribal member Alan Lane, who just finished his G.E.D. diploma, was working on the computer to gain his food handlers license as the Governor entered.

The governor also disclosed that he had nothing but books on his iPod.

"My wife and I belong to a book club," he said, "and I asked her, 'Does it count in book clubs if I read it on tape?' She said, 'No.'"

Regarding the Tribe's computer

lab, Kulongoski told the story of a school that gave laptop computers to its students and found that when the students took the computers home, the parents learned to use them as well.

"The parents became fluent with the kids," he said. ■

Photos by
Toby McClary



Tribal Council member Wink Soderberg walked with Kulongoski and staff while on their way to the Tribe's Health & Wellness Center.



Governor Kulongoski watches as the Tribal preschool students and Grand Ronde's Canoe Family sing an honor song before lunch.