

### CASINO continued from front page

"lollypop" lamb, "tuxedo" strawberries and many hard and soft cheeses. Where the yellow carpet ended, Tribal Elders and dignitaries welcomed the crowd, and thanked those who made this all possible.

For the invocation, Tribal Elder Kathryn Harrison was thankful that the Tribe had come from poverty "to what we have here today."

"We are living out the dreams of our Elders and our ancestors," Harrison said.

"We're proud and grateful and very humbled to experience this time in our history," said Tribal Chairwoman Cheryle A. Kennedy.

"We have a wonderful staff that puts it all together for us," said Tribal Council member Kathleen Tom.

"When we got started," said Tribal Council member Steve Bobb Sr., "we didn't know what a casino was, and now, here we are, the number one attraction in the state."

"I grew up two blocks down the street," said Tribal Council member Wink Soderberg. "I remember complaining there was never anything to do around here. We could not conceive of anything like this. Now, we don't have to take a back seat to anyone."

Tribal Elder Margaret Provost recalled the "hard struggle" that Tribal leaders endured during the 30 years of Termination. She recalled the resistance to Restoration by local people who "thought we were going to take their homes away because this had once been reservation land."

Casino Interim General Manager Roy Rhode and Tribal member and Casino Facilities Director Ron Reibach recognized staff and contractors for their beautiful work and for completing the job three months ahead of schedule.

Rhode assisted Tribal Chairwoman Kennedy in the official cutting of the red ribbon to officially open the expansion.

Five generations of the Kimsey family — all Tribal — were on hand for the opening: Nora, 99; her daughter, Margaret Provost, 77; her daughter, Jackie Provost, 56; her daughter, Camille Mercier, 37; and her son, Kalim Mercier, 12.

Tribal Royalty performed and individually welcomed the guests.

The 135,396-square-foot expansion allows the casino to reintroduce bingo to the many who have missed it since



▲ Grand Ronde Honor Guard member Steve Rife leads the procession during the opening ceremony for the southern expansion at Spirit Mountain Casino on Thursday, May 15.



◀ Tribal Council member Wink Soderberg talks during the opening ceremony.

Photos by Michelle Alaimo

the game was temporarily suspended at the casino in 2006 to make room for new slot machines and existing table games in the room that now houses The Peak.

The 17,600-square-foot entertainment hall will accommodate 1,800 for bingo and concerts, and between 10 and 1,600 for full service, in-house catering and conventions. The facility can be divided into two, three or four rooms.

A new buffet, the Cedar Plank Buffet, with seating for 450, opened to the public on May 12. Including all of the eateries in the casino complex, Spirit Mountain will now be feeding 2,000 guests a day, up from the average 1,500

meals served previously every day.

"It has always been an Indian tradition to feed people," said Tribal Elder Betty Bly, "and now we have a beautiful new place to do that. I also think the buffet will bring people to the casino."

For Executive Chef Richard Burr, the opening meant a host of new equipment that will enable the staff to cook more at once.

Headliner acts for the opening weekend featured "Saturday Night Live" alumnus Dana Carvey on May 16. sold out to more than 1,750 fans,

and the popular rock group Blues Traveler on May 17.

But that night, as the sun was heading behind the hills to the west, bluesman Curtis Salgado took the stage for the new facility's first concert.

Even though the almost 200 people in attendance looked to Salgado like "an intimate little party" compared with the size of the room, but the music, it was clear, like the new addition, like the new buffet, like the special guests from across the Northwest, like the dreams of ancestors, was oh so sweet. ■

*"I prayed for help tonight. If I tell all the things that it took to get here, I'd start crying."*

~ Tribal Elder  
**Kathryn Harrison**



Photo by Michelle Alaimo

Tribal member and Casino Human Resources Director Camille Mercier, left, watches Senior Miss Grand Ronde Josie Faris introduce herself during the opening ceremony for the southern expansion at Spirit Mountain Casino. In line to also introduce themselves are Junior Miss Grand Ronde Lindsay McCue, Junior Veterans' Queen Nakoosa Moreland, Grand Ronde Senior Young Warrior Peter Nelson and Grand Ronde Junior Warrior Osprey Gibbons.



Photo by Michelle Alaimo

Tribal member and Spirit Mountain Casino marketing employee Tanya Lopez checks people in and gives them passes during the opening for the southern expansion at the casino on Thursday, May 15.