

# Kennedy welcomes National Indian Head Start staff to Portland conference

By Ron Karten

*Smoke Signals staff writer*

Tribal Council Chairwoman Cheryle A. Kennedy welcomed members of the National Indian Head Start Directors Association to their 18th annual Management Training Conference, this year held in Grand Ronde's ceded territory in Portland.

Indian Head Start people came from across the country and Canada.

"Managing the Currents of Change," the conference theme, included discussions of personnel and organizational changes. Also on the agenda were the issues arising as federal Head Start legislation unfolds across the nation.

"I believe in my heart," said Kennedy on Tuesday, June 24, at the Red Lion Inn at Jantzen Beach on the third day of the five-day conference, "that children need to be a much higher priority in our families and schools. In doing so, we fulfill the wisdom of the great Creator.

"When I think about the hardships our ancestors went through, I am very humbled. I know we have answers from our ancestors. We just have to seek them out."

Kennedy emphasized stories and traditions as ways to teach the "lit-



Photo by Ron Karten

**Grand Ronde Tribal Chairwoman Cheryle A. Kennedy delivered the welcome address to the National Indian Head Start Directors Association on Tuesday, June 24, at the Red Lion Inn at Jantzen Beach in Portland. The Management Training Conference drew Head Start staff from across the United States and Canada.**

tle ones," who in the coming years will "take up the banner."

State Sen. Kate Brown, who is running for Secretary of State and is the longest serving legislative member of the Legislative Commission on Indian Services, keynoted.

She said that the commission helped push through nine Tribal-friendly bills in the 2007 Legislature and killed two bills considered harmful to Oregon's nine federally

recognized Tribes.

Though critics say the Head Start program is not cost effective, Brown said that the program actually provides \$9 worth of benefits for every \$1 spent.

On that background, she added that the legislative and executive branches of the federal government have failed to fully fund Head Start in the coming year.

"Cuts could reach 15,000 employ-

ees across the country because of Congress's failure to provide even cost-of-living increases for the coming year," Brown said.

The tone of this opening session was nothing if not hopeful. "The future will be better and brighter because of your hard work," Brown said.

"You will have fulfillment, joys, great memories, devotion and love," Kennedy said. "I applaud you."

Grand Ronde's Eagle Beak Drum performed and the Grand Ronde Honor Guard posted the colors. Tribal Council member Chris Mercier also attended the event.

The next day — Wednesday, June 25 — the Tribe hosted a dinner for conference attendees at the Cathlapotle Plankhouse on the Ridgefield

Wildlife Reserve in Washington state. A team from Spirit Mountain Casino prepared a traditional Northwest Native meal of oysters and clams.

Lisa Archuletta of the Portland office assisted Public Affairs Director Siobhan Taylor at the event. The Tribal Canoe Family also entertained in the plankhouse with drumming, singing and dancing. ■

## Higher grades

**Graduation Celebration honors 102 Tribal members**

By Dean Rhodes

*Smoke Signals editor*

More than 100 Tribal members were honored at a Graduation Celebration held June 20 in the Tribal gymnasium for graduating from high school, obtaining their GED or earning degrees from vocational or postsecondary institutions.

This year's theme was "Lead With Our Hearts: Restoration and Education" and featured as guest speakers Tribal Elder and former Tribal Chairwoman Kathryn Harrison and Tribal members Jack Ham, Matthew Zimbrick and Jade Unger.

Tribal Council Vice Chairman Reyn Leno and Tribal Council members Chris Mercier, Wink Soderberg and Steve Bobb Sr. also attended the Graduation Celebration.

The celebration recognized 35 Tribal high school graduates, 23 Tribal members who obtained GEDs, four Tribal members who earned certificate degrees, nine Tribal members who ob-

tained associate (two-year) college degrees, 25 Tribal members who obtained bachelor's degrees and six Tribal members who earned master's degrees.

"It's a wonderful thing to see members accessing educational services more than ever," said Education Division Manager April Campbell. "We are recognizing the value and strength of education. And it gives me a sense of peace as I envision the future of our Tribe."

Each master's degree graduate received an eagle feather prepared by Tribal employees Bobby Mercier and Luhui Whitebear.

"I personally want to thank Youth Education, Higher Education and the Library staff for organizing this event," Campbell said. "And the Decorating Committee for a beautiful layout."

Campbell also cited Continuing Education Coordinator John Harp for gathering photos and information for the slideshow, the Cultural Resources Department for use of historic photos, Tribal Graphics Design Specialist George Valdez for



Photo by Michelle Alaimo

**Tribal member Aliea Smith holds her daughter Jacey Smith, 4, who is also a Tribal member, after wrapping her in the Pendleton blanket she received during the Graduation Celebration held in the Tribal gymnasium on Friday, June 20. Aliea Smith received the blanket for earning her GED.**

designing the program cover and poster. Facilities for setting up the gym a day in advance and Countryside Catering for the salmon and elk spaghetti served before the celebration.

Campbell also thanked Education Committee members Shelby Olson-Rogers, Justin Taylor, Terri Dilts, Connie Holmes and Jon George "for their support during the event and

throughout the year."

"And thank you to our graduates and their family and friends for making this year's celebration a success," Campbell said.

A full list of Tribal graduates will be included in the Education Division's annual special section, which will be published later this year in *Smoke Signals*. ■