

Veterans SEB seeks shot of new blood

By Ron Karten

Smoke Signals staff writer

At a Tribe-hosted dinner to interest new Tribal veterans to join the Tribe's Veterans Special Event Board on Oct. 21 at the Tribal Community Center, 11 Elders and members showed up.

Two were Tribal Council members: Tribal Elder and Vice Chairman Reyn Leno and Tribal Elder Steve Bobb Sr., both Vietnam veterans and council member liaisons to the board.

One was Tribal member Kristy DeLoe, Food Service coordinator for the Tribe's Health and Wellness Department.

Those who attended were full of ideas for bringing the committee — now with only two Tribal members — back to life.

Tribal Elder Bob Tom said that the 250 veterans who lined up for Grand Entry at the 2008 Veterans' Powwow showed how valuable the Veterans Special Event Board is. The Veterans SEB also sponsors the Veterans' Powwow annually.

To start with, Leno suggested that Tribal Council might amend committee regulations to reduce the number required for the committee from seven to five.

While a Northwest Indian Veterans Association group with Native and nonNative members continues to do the Honor Guard work that is at the heart of the group's obligations, Tribal regulations require that the Veterans SEB be made up of Tribal veterans.

Potentially, the membership change also could include an amendment allowing nonTribal vets to join the committee, suggested Tribal Elder Gene LaBonte, who has been the backbone of the Veterans SEB for years and who serves this year on the Governor's



Photo by Ron Karten

Tribal Elder Gene LaBonte and Tribal Council members Steve Bobb Sr., center, and Reyn Leno, right, discuss ways to increase Tribal member participation in the Veterans Special Event Board during an Oct. 21 meeting held at the Tribal Community Center.

Veterans Affairs Advisory Committee. Most veterans who serve on today's Grand Ronde Honor Guard are not Tribal.

Tom suggested that "more activities" could make the committee more attractive to Tribal veterans. Tom said that the group might set a good example of "Indians honoring other veterans."

Tribal Elder Monty Parazoo, a Vietnam veteran who came up to the meeting from Eugene, where he lives, suggested "doing something special for Tribal veterans."

"Very few veterans just back from the military are getting involved," LaBonte said. "We're doing a lot for veterans, but we're failing Tribal veterans."

Many veterans, particularly those who have just come out of the service, "don't want to be in parades," Leno said.

"Five to six weeks after their return," LaBonte said, "they're still wound up."

Among the ideas for additional activities, Leno suggested that the group invite speakers from Veterans Affairs. "If you're like me," he said, "you sit at home and wonder what's available to you as a vet. I don't know."

Tom suggested including signature projects, like other service organizations sponsor. "Groups have toy drives," he said. "We could help Elders." He also asked, "What do we do for veterans when they come and go from the service?"

"You start with kids," Leno said. He said that the Education center is a place the Tribe might start instilling respect for and information about veterans with field trips, for example, to the Veterans Memorial on the Tribal campus.

LaBonte suggested sending out a survey to see what kind of activities Tribal veterans want and would support.

Because the Veterans SEB organizes and runs the Veterans' Pow-

wow, this board function, at least, will continue in some form.

Tribal Elder and Vietnam veteran Butch LaBonte, brother to Gene, suggested increasing interest with a contest for a new veterans' blanket design.

"We also need good support staff," LaBonte said, "to take notes and keep the budget."

Parazoo said that he had not previously joined the Veterans SEB because he was never asked to join.

"It seemed like there was a group that was doing it, and they weren't reaching out to others," Parazoo said.

Leno said that a young vet, just recently released from duty in Iraq, joined the group but quit a couple months later.

"Younger vets don't feel welcome," said Parazoo. "You need to personally reach out to them."

"Sometimes you think you work them too hard, or expect too much," LaBonte said.

"Sometimes, we go to funerals with less than five others in attendance," he added. Once, there were just two others, explaining why some might lose interest.

The numbers (on the board) have been declining for years, Bobb said.

When the meeting began, the committee had just two Tribal members: LaBonte and Elder Betty Lambert. Lambert, however, is leaving the group, LaBonte said.

As the meeting ended, Monty Parazoo joined, single-handedly trending the committee in the right direction without actually increasing the committee's size.

"(Tribal Elder, now deceased) Merle Leno said that once you start something, you don't give it up," LaBonte recalled. "We just need some new ideas." ■

Addiction treatment program receives ANA award

Culturally-based recovery cited as working well

By Ron Karten

Smoke Signals staff writer

The Tribal addiction post-treatment program received a prestigious Commissioners Award for Innovation in Substance Abuse Treatment at the national conference of the Administration for Native Americans held Sept. 22 in Washington, D.C.

The Administration for Native Americans is a federal Department of Health & Human Services program.

Grand Ronde Social Services Manager Dave Fullerton accepted the award for the program, but credited Post Treatment Services Coordinator Joe Martineau (Minnesota Chippewas, Fond du Lac Reservation) and Support Counselor Chris Holiday (Warm Springs), who run the program, "and the guys who participated."

Those "guys" have been "hugely successful," Fullerton said.

Through the program, the Tribe has provided post-treatment transition services to about 36 men, all but one of them Tribal members.

The program also accepts Tribal descendants and, space permitting, other Natives. Currently, the house is full with five clients.

Program funding started in September 2005 with a \$599,332 two-year grant from the Administration for Native Americans, which included extensive renovation of the home and outbuilding activity space, enhanced prevention activities and some supplemental funds for treatment. The transition house opened in September 2006.

For comparison, Fullerton pointed to a study from the Bureau of Justice Statistics called "American Indians and Crime."

"The (Grand Ronde) client count of only two (2) re-arrests from the total number of twenty-six (26) clients, or 7.7 percent, during these six months compares highly favorably measured against national data on re-arrests by Native Americans of about 25 percent in the first six months after release from jail."

The award highlighted the Tribe's "innovative approach using a culturally-based recovery program," Full-

erton said. "It stressed culture rather than pounding in the message, 'Don't drink, don't use drugs.'"

The message is "you should maintain sobriety while participating in cultural activities," Fullerton said.

The program began when the addiction community realized that "there was a huge gap in services, that we didn't have a safe and sober place for a lot of people to stay when coming out of treatment," Fullerton said. "That's what we provided to them."

Since the end of the two-year pilot, beginning with the 2008 budget year, the Tribe has funded the post-treatment services program.

"Ultimately, this is funded by Tribal dollars," Fullerton said, "but it is saving Tribal dollars because people aren't having to return to treatment as frequently."



Photo courtesy of the Administration for Native Americans

Grand Ronde Social Services Manager Dave Fullerton accepted a Commissioners Award for Innovation in Substance Abuse Treatment at the national conference of the Administration for Native Americans held in Washington, D.C., on Sept. 22. He stands with ANA Commissioner Quanah Crossland Stamps (Cherokee).

An external evaluation by Dr. John Spence of the Northwest Indian Training Association contributed to the Tribe's program being selected for the award. ■