

Events Center booked to capacity

RESTORATION continued
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two-day 25th Restoration celebration, which began Friday night with a powwow coordinated by Tribal Elder Bob Tom.

For Saturday's reception and banquet, the Events Center was booked to capacity with almost 1,500 Tribal members and their family members and guests in attendance.

While Tribal members waited for Restoration Celebration headliner Rita Coolidge (Cherokee) to finish her sound check inside the Events Center, they feasted in the Events Center hallway on traditional appetizers of lamprey, venison, elk and smoked salmon prepared by Spirit Mountain Casino's Executive Chef Richard Burr and his staff. An ice sculpture of the Tribal logo accented the ceremonial food offerings.

When Tribal Council members and Elders entered the Events Center, 140 tables that had 10 seats each greeted them. A giant Tribal logo overlaid with the words "25th Anniversary" dominated the stage. Seats featured a Tribal gift bag, which included the long version of the Tribe's 25th Restoration video, a poster created by Tribal member Jon George, Spirit Mountain Casino watches, chocolates covered in silver foil that honored past Tribal chiefs and other goodies.

While waiting for the official festivities to begin, Tribal members watched on six screens a "Walking On" slideshow that honored Tribal members who have passed away since Nov. 22, 2003 — the 20th anniversary of Restoration.

At 4:02 p.m., drum group Star Horse (Warm Springs) opened the Restoration celebration and the Grand Ronde Honor Guard, followed by current Tribal Council members, entered the Events Center.



Photos by Michelle Alaimo

Tribal Elder Dean Mercier, left, says a few words as Elders Margaret Provost and Russell Leno look on during the 25th Restoration Celebration on Saturday, Nov. 22. The three, along with Tribal Elder Marvin Kimsey, who was not present, were recognized at the celebration for their Restoration efforts.

The Grand Ronde Canoe Family performed two honor songs before an invocation offered by Tribal member Ken Haller.

Tribal Royalty signed "The Lord's Prayer," sung by Aaron Neville, before Tribal Chairwoman Cheryle A. Kennedy took the stage to welcome Tribal members.

"It is truly a pleasure to be here today," Kennedy said, "to know that we have come through an era of rejoicing. I will say that there were some pretty dark times for us when we were terminated during the '50s on up until Nov. 22, 1983.

"But we are a people who are strong; who are courageous and we are survivors.

"I also believe that Creator was greatly in charge of our destiny and, because of that, helped us, helped the leaders that he had touched and spoke to their hearts and asked them to come together, and gave them the wisdom and direction so that we can be here tonight, sitting here together as a great, strong, proud Nation. ... We're very blessed and very glad to be here tonight in celebration of this great occasion."

Kennedy honored all 40 Tribal members who have served on Tribal Council since the first post-Restoration Tribal Council took its seats in 1984. They, or their descendants, received commemorative 25th Restoration Pendleton blankets.

"We want to recognize that there is a path that has been laid down for us," Kennedy said.

Tribal Council members recognized were Angie Blackwell, Steve Bobb Sr., Larry Brandon, Wilmadene Butler, Jack Giffen Jr., Dorothy Greene, Val Grout, Bob Haller, Frank Harrison, Kathryn Harrison, Merle Holmes, Andy Jenness, Cheryle A. Kennedy, Marvin Kimsey, Bradley Kowing, Earl LaBonte, Eugene LaBonte, Ed Larsen, Merle Leno, Reyn Leno, Russell Leno, Ray McKnight, Rick McKnight, Bob Mercier, Chris Mercier, Darrell Mercier, Dean Mercier, Mark Mercier, Ed Pearsall, Eula Petite, Henry Petite, Margaret Provost, Jan Reibach, Candy Robertson, June Sell-Sherer, Valorie Sheker, Wink Soderberg, Leon "Chip" Tom, Kathleen Tom and Wesley "Buddy" West.

"Thank you for all the service that you have provided to the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde," Kennedy said.

Kennedy then turned the crowd's attention to surviving Tribal members who worked on Restoration in the 1970s.

"Many of them gave all that they had, using their own finances and own resources to make the attempt of Restoration," Kennedy said. "I want to give honor where honor is due."

Kennedy called up Tribal Elders Marvin Kimsey, Margaret Provost, Russell Leno and Dean Mercier to receive special recognition for their early work on the Tribal Restoration effort. (Kimsey did not attend the event.)

"I was glad to help, but I didn't think we could help out *this* much," Mercier said. "I'm sure glad to see everybody here celebrating our Restoration, and many more to come."

"I'm glad to be here celebrating



Tribal Elder John Lillard and his guest Janice Whitehurst look at a ceded lands map that was in gift bags given to most everyone who attended the 25th Restoration Celebration.

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