

Grand Ronde Tribe

Sell-Sherer handed the Grand Ronde flag to Bobb and Leno, who connected it with latches. When instructed, Leno hoisted the Grand Ronde flag as Sell-Sherer saluted and Bobb watched it rise into the air.

"The Tribal Government Day celebration was important and a very significant event to me," Sell-Sherer said. "Not just because I was honored with the privilege of representing our Tribal veterans by carrying in our flag at the flag raising ceremony.

"But because now after 175 years, the state has declared and officially recognized all of the Oregon Tribes as sovereign nations. It is a major step forward and a long time overdue."

After the flags were raised, Umatilla Tribal Chair Antone Minthorn performed a bell song.

"We have been on this land for thousands of years, lived on this land for thousands of years, fought on this land and died on this land," he said.

"Today, we come here to raise our flags as nine Tribes and nine sovereign nations. We raise the flags because of the people who were here before us. We will continue with our traditions, language and customs under these flags."

After Mike Rondo of the Cow Creek Tribe sang the national anthem a cappella, Minthorn recognized state officials in the audience, including Gov. Ted Kulongoski, Secretary of State Kate Brown, Attorney General John Kroger and state Sens. Chuck Riley, Ted Ferrioli and Rick Metsger. It was Metsger's 2008 measure that authorized the Tribal flags and monuments, which were paid for by the Tribes and the Oregon State Capitol Foundation.

"Welcome to your state Capitol," Brown said. "With the installation of these nine flags, it is truly your Capitol. And I look forward to working with you in the future. This is truly a historic occasion and I hope it's an opportunity for all of us to work together under these flags for the betterment of each other, all Oregonians and future generations."

"These nine flags have been missing from this park over the past several years," Kulongoski said before reading a proclamation declaring May 14 as Tribal Government Flag Day and May 16-23 as American Indian Week.

"I'm proud to live in a state that respects and admires its nine sovereign Tribal governments, and proud to lead a state government that engages its Tribes as sovereign equals.

"Oregon is blessed that these nine Tribes enrich our culture, serve as stewards of the land and contribute so much to this state that each of

us holds so dear."

After Kulongoski's speech and proclamation reading, representatives from the nine Tribes addressed the crowd: Tribal Chairman Dean Adams from the Burns Paiute; Chairman Bob Garcia from the Coos, Lower Umpqua & Siuslaw; Chairman Ed Metcalf from the Coquille; Chairwoman Cheryl A. Kennedy from Grand Ronde; Chairwoman Sue Shaffer from the Cow Creek; Chairman Antone Minthorn from the Umatilla; Vice Chairwoman Aurolyn Stwyer from the Warm Springs; Chairman Joe Kirk from the Klamath; and Chairwoman Delores Pigsley from the Siletz.

"This was truly a historic event," Kennedy said. "What I see here today in recognizing this historic moment is really an action of the heart. You can legislate things, but it is only when a changing of the heart occurs that you can embrace each other, and that is what I see here today. And I am very grateful that this is happening for the Tribes and the state of Oregon."

"These flags represent honor, sacrifice, history, culture and perseverance," Metcalf said.

"We are no longer in a hostile, adversarial relationship," Antone Minthorn said. "The flags signify a great government-to-government relationship."

At 11:40, the event ended and attendees adjourned across the street to Water Fountain Park to eat a bar-

becue lunch provided by the Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Indians and its Seven Feathers Casino.

"It was great," Bobb said about the day's events. "A great day in that the pain and suffering of our ancestors whose footprints on this land were washed away by a stroke of a pen and ignored as an invisible people now share a place of honor on the grounds of the Capitol of this great state."

"The Grand Ronde people proudly stand beside our brothers and sisters of the eight other Tribes of Oregon, as sovereign people, and hopefully free the anguished spirits of our ancestors.

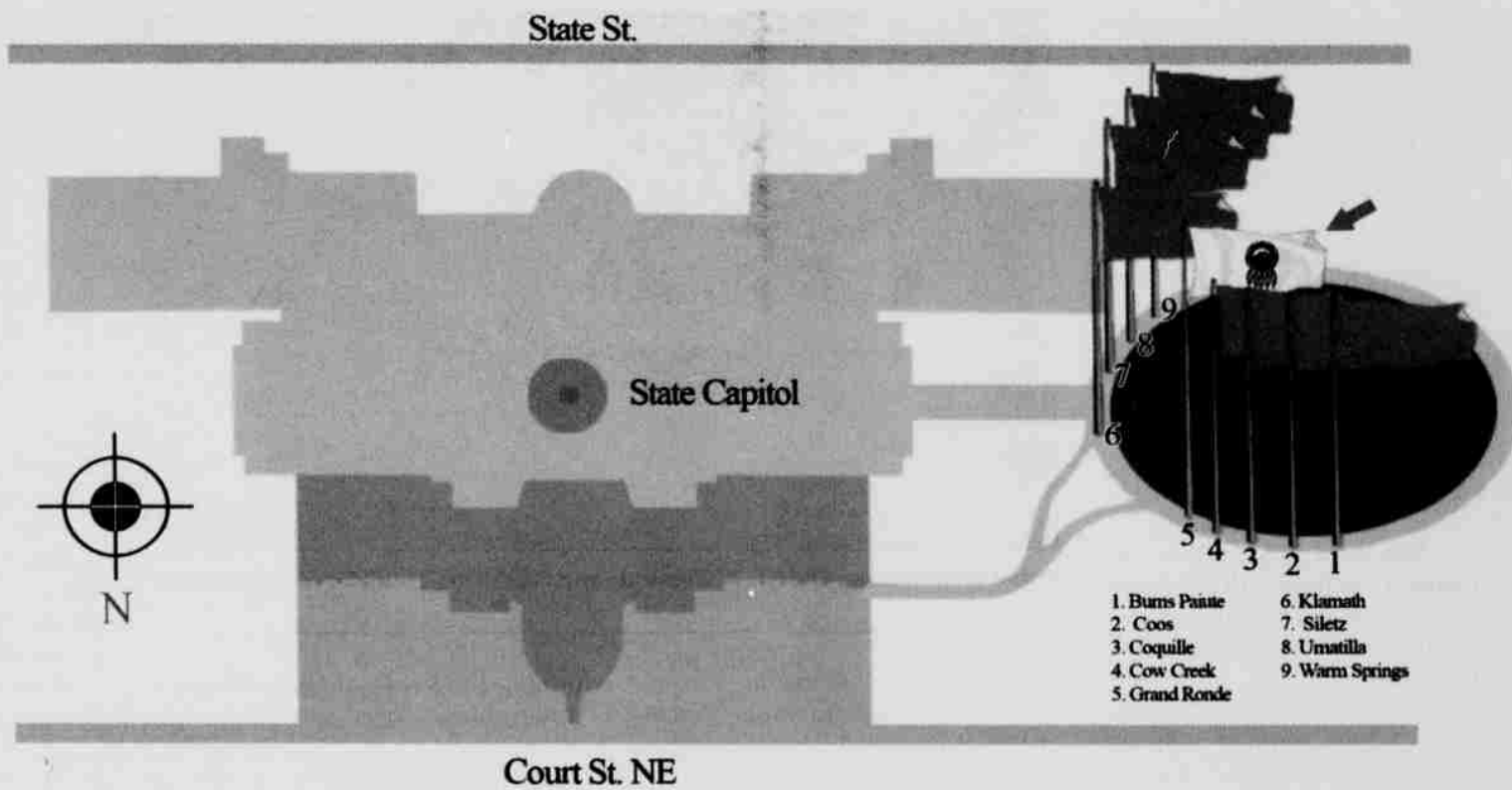
"As a Tribal member and a veteran, I wear my emotions very close to my heart. Whenever I represent our people, it is with overwhelming joy and the utmost pride."

"I think it's good to honor the

presence of people who have been here forever," Tribal Council member Chris Mercier said. "I think it matters because we are sovereign nations, we were here before and we will always be a part of Oregon's history. We each have our unique history and story to tell. I think it's quite appropriate."

"It was so historic," said Tribal Council member Kathleen Tom. "It was such a pleasure to be here with my Dad (Tribal Elder Leon "Chip" Tom), who was the third generation of Tribal Council and I'm the fourth generation. Sharing that memory with him will always last in my heart."

"And seeing our flag fly at the Capitol because I remember the times before Restoration that there weren't really any good memories at the state Capitol. Today meant a lot to me." ■



Graphic created by George Valdez



Grand Ronde Honor Guard members, from left, Tribal member Steve Rife, Norris Merrill, Tribal member Gene LaBonte and Chris Tinney wait for the start of the procession during Tribal Government Day in Salem on Thursday, May 14.