

2010 Canoe Journey preparations under way

Three Tribal canoes will be paddled up the Pacific Coast to Neah Bay

By Ron Karten

Smoke Signals staff writer

For the 2010 Inter Tribal Canoe Journey to the Makah Reservation, the Grand Ronde/Chinook Canoe Family intended a roll-over practice in which participants right a canoe that has turned over.

"When you are going over, make sure you hold onto your paddle," said Henry Pettit, member of the Chinook Tribe. "It feels like your body is getting sucked under the canoe."

"Know who your partner is. With the adrenalin rush, it is easy to forget, and everybody is responsible for one another."

"We don't want to scare people," said Canoe Journey regular Tony Johnson (Chinook), who is Cultural

Education coordinator for the Tribe, "but we want people to be serious about training."

The preparations came during a session in the Cultural Resources Department conference room on June 16, an afternoon when the group intended to be in the Pacific Ocean north of Lincoln City.

But the weather did not cooperate.

Instead, the group, including Johnson, Language and Culture Specialist Bobby Mercier (Grand Ronde), Social Services Manager Dave Fullerton and Ken Cramer (Chinook), talked about dividing into teams, one that will hold the canoe still or rock the water out, and another that will work from inside the canoe to bail water out.

"Keep the canoe balanced while rocking it, so you don't get more water in the boat than out," said Pettit.

"Designate the small people who will jump back in the canoe first and start bailing," said Fullerton.

The work is strenuous enough that participants are advised to trade jobs every two minutes.

Maybe most striking about the advice: "Try to get back in the canoe within five minutes. Hypothermia could set in without your realizing it," Pettit said.

"You get sprayed with every wave," said Johnson, "and that will cool your body down pretty quickly. This journey will push you to your limits."

The group will meet at least weekly for planning and practice until the journey begins on Friday, July 9. With crews from many Tribes — last year more than 90 canoes paddled to Suquamish — details of the journey continue to unfold.

Roughly speaking, however, the Grand Ronde Canoe /Chinook Family anticipates starting in Bay Center,

Wash., and continuing up the Pacific Coast on to Taholah (Quinalt Reservation), Destruction Island (Quinalt), Hoh Reservation, La Push (Quileute Reservation), Ozette (Makah Reservation), with a final landing at Neah Bay (Makah) on July 19, and protocol events there from July 19-24.

In addition to the paddling work, there are many different kinds of opportunities to participate for Tribal and community members, from paddling to providing support in other ways.

The Grand Ronde/Chinook Canoe Family intends to paddle three canoes to Neah Bay. Each will be accompanied by a support boat, and all will be supplied and served by drivers and cooks, and people to put up and take down camps and provide logistics.

For information about joining the Canoe Family or helping with the journey, contact Bobby Mercier at the Cultural Resources Department, 503-879-2076. ■

'It is indeed a very good day'

STATION continued
from front page

had lost her husband and was not prepared for the hard winter.

"A teaching of our Elders and our ancestors is to acknowledge not only working for our people, but others," Kennedy said. "That same spirit is alive here today. We, as the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, look at the community and know that whatever situation that our neighbor is in and that if there is something we can do to assist them, we will do that."

"In the spirit of that thinking, safety was paramount for the entire community, not just the Tribal community. When we entered into negotiations, it was always with that thinking."

Kennedy said Tribal Council considered not only the special needs of Spirit Mountain Casino and Lodge, but its responsibility to protect Tribal and Elder housing and the hundreds of non-Tribal homes in the Grand Ronde area.

"It is indeed a very good day," Kennedy said.

West Valley Assistant Fire Chief Dave Meier stressed the 10 minutes that will be saved now that fire district employees are housed in the Grand Ronde area around the clock.

"Ten minutes can mean the difference between life and death," Meier said. "With this agreement, there will be a change in that 10 minutes. It will now be a much shorter period of time."

"The effort between these two governing bodies has brought a much needed change to both the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde and the Grand Ronde community at large. It is through this government-to-government relationship that lives will be saved and property will be saved. It is through this effort that the future of Grand Ronde looks safer and brighter."

"We look forward to a strong partnership and continuing to improve the overall protection of the Grand

Ronde community."

After his speech, Meier joined Tribal Council Chairwoman Cheryl A. Kennedy, Vice Chairman Reyn Leno, Tribal Council members Steve Bobb Sr. and Chris Mercier and Wakeland for the ribbon cutting that officially opened the 5,700-square-foot building.

During self-guided tours of the building, fire district employees said they liked their new work environment.

"It's nice," said paramedic Ilya Golub. "It's new and awesome. I love the kitchen."

"Heaven's more," said paramedic/firefighter Tami Tigner about the dorm rooms when she was asked if the station was sufficient. "It's better than where I live. I think I might just move in and live here."

"I think it means the community is automatically safer," said Tribal Council member Chris Mercier in the fire station parking lot. "It shows that we're serious about helping out this community. We're serious about developing this community and we're serious about being good community partners."

"Quicker response," said Vice Chair Reyn Leno about the effect of the new fire station. "You're reducing the time for emergency, fire, everything else. We all know that the first five, 10 minutes is a critical time."

"This just shows our commitment. We always said that we would give back to the community. This benefits both the community and the Tribe. That's the bottom line."

Leno said a fire station was something the Tribe should have built when it started building Tribal and Elder housing.

"This should have been part of



Photo by Michelle Alaimo

From left, the Tribe's Director of Development Pete Wakeland, Tribal Council members Chris Mercier and Steve Bobb Sr., Vice Chairman Reyn Leno, West Valley Assistant Fire Chief Dave Meier and Tribal Council Chairwoman Cheryl A. Kennedy, participated in the ribbon cutting that officially opened the 5,700-square-foot Grand Ronde Fire Station on Friday, June 25.

that plan," Leno said. "I think it's a safety issue for the community and the Tribe."

Leno said he is impressed by the changes that have occurred recently in the community, particularly to and along Grand Ronde Road.

"I never thought walking up and down this road that I would ever see a fire station here," he said.

"I think it brings a sense of security to the Grand Ronde community," Bobb said, "because of the time frame that's going to be cut in half or more than that."

"For people in an emergency situation where every minute is a lifetime, this is great. We're pretty serious about making sure that everyone is protected ... everybody."

Tribal Health Services Executive Director Mark Johnston said for Tribal Health Clinic patients, the nearby fire station will substantially cut down response times for those who are stabilized at the clinic but still need to get to a hospital.

"We are going to see a significant increase in lives saved and that cannot be overstated," Johnston said.

The Grand Ronde Tribe and West Valley Fire District signed an inter-governmental agreement in July 2009 in which the Tribe agreed to design and build the new fire station on 2.5 acres of Tribal land.

The Tribe also agreed to buy the Quint and equipment for three firefighters/paramedics, three firefighters/emergency medical technicians and six volunteer firefighters.

The agreement also calls for the Tribe to fund those positions with a maximum 3 percent increase annually.

Previously, the fire district maintained a storage facility on Grand Ronde Road that was not staffed and dispatched emergency responders from its main station in Willamina.

The West Valley Fire District is doubling in manpower from five to 11 employees to staff the new fire station.

Meier said the fire district is ready to occupy the fire station.

Wakeland said the turnout lockers are scheduled to arrive in mid-July and the building will be turned over to the fire district in a couple of weeks. ■