

Tribal representatives brief forum

By Dean Rhodes

Smoke Signals editor

Tribal Chairwoman Cheryle A. Kennedy and Tribal staff attorney Lisa Bluelake spread the word about Tribal environmental stewardship efforts in the Willamette Valley on Friday, July 23, before the City Club of Portland's Friday Forum during a luncheon at the Governor Hotel.

Described by City Club President Sharon Van Sickle-Robbins as the "premier public affairs forum" in Portland, the presentation also was carried on Portland city cable TV and Oregon Public Broadcasting radio.

Kennedy was the first speaker, spending most of her time relating the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde's history in western Oregon, southern Washington and northern California.

Kennedy explained how Tribal ancestors lived for thousands of years in an area with plentiful food, living in plankhouses and using the rivers of western Oregon as their main means of travel.

There was enough food, she said, that Tribal ancestors had enough leisure time to develop arts and become great weavers and carvers.

"We also became great storytellers," Kennedy said, "and great traders."

But, as many Tribal members know, the arrival of European traders and settlers in the early 19th century started the downward spiral for Tribal ancestors. In the 1850s, she said, seven ratified treaties ceded almost all of western Oregon to the federal government and Tribes were sent to live on reservations.

"The land you are now sitting on was owned by the ancestors of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde," Kennedy said. "Our lives were forever altered."



Photo by Michelle Alaimo

Tribal Chairwoman Cheryle A. Kennedy shakes hands with Hyunyi Clark-Shim as Clark-Shim introduces herself after Kennedy spoke at the City Club of Portland's Friday Forum at the Governor Hotel in Portland on Friday, July 23. Tribal staff attorney Lisa Bluelake also spoke at the event.

Tribal members were forced to the Grand Ronde Reservation to live with rival Tribes and bands with different languages and customs.

"A great adaptation had to occur," she said. "Life got harder and the face of Oregon changed forever."

Kennedy jumped to 1954's Western Oregon Termination Act, which ended federal recognition for many Oregon Tribes, including the Grand Ronde, and the 30 years during which "we lived as a landless people ... an invisible people." She then told of 1983's Restoration and the hard work and perseverance that

went into regaining federal recognition and a new reservation.

"We are proud, resilient people who adapt to change," Kennedy said. "We are survivors."

Kennedy lamented the environmental degradation that has occurred in the Tribe's ceded lands over the last 200 years of non-Indian control.

The area has seen overfishing of salmon, clear cutting of forests, reductions in wildlife populations and polluted water resources.

"Our ways were scorned," she said. "Natives respect all living things. Use what you take, take what you'll use. Plan for seven generations."

"The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde is working to correct practices for healing to come to our environment. We need to be inspired to lead the world to a better place."

Bluelake followed Kennedy, delving into the nuts and bolts of Tribal projects that are helping to improve the environment of not only Reservation land, but of Tribal ceded lands in western Oregon.

"The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde is displaying strong environmental stewardship on and off the reservation," said Bluelake, who has been a Tribal staff attorney for 10 years.

Bluelake discussed protection efforts, such as Spirit Mountain Community Fund, the Tribe's philanthropic arm, giving more than \$5 million over the last decade to environmental groups.

She discussed Tribal environmental rehabilitation efforts on the Reservation that include acquiring ceremonial hunting rights from the state, creation of a state-approved Tribal Fish & Wildlife Management Plan, stream enhancements and culvert replacements, creation of

100 acres of elk grazing area and a fish weir to monitor populations in Reservation waterways.

Off-reservation, Bluelake said the Tribe participates in the Portland Harbor cleanup, worked to get the Environmental Protection Agency to adopt fish consumption rates for Tribal populations as its benchmark and conducts lamprey research to assess the health of the fish population in the Willamette River basin.

"The Tribe is making up ground from when it was terminated," Bluelake said.

After the two presentations, audience members asked questions.

City Club member and Friday Forum organizer Promise King asked how Tribal members have been able to forgive the past.

"Our people are resilient," Kennedy said. "We're adaptable and plan for the future. We seek ways of healing our souls. We find in our heart that we are able to live with our neighbors and share."

Another audience member asked how Natives adopted the western concept of land ownership.

"For us," Kennedy said, "land ownership is more about stewardship of the land. The concept of owning is stewardship that we take seriously."

Another questioner asked how the Tribe is reviving its culture and language.

Kennedy said the Tribe's cultural programs are building, thanks to Chinuk Wawa language immersion programs for youth and reacquisition and restoration of cultural artifacts.

Another City Club member asked about Tribal educational efforts.

"I sit here proud to state that more Tribal members are pursuing a higher education degree," Kennedy said. "I believe that education is the key to self-sufficiency." ■

Transportation to Grand Ronde

The Portland satellite office has a transportation day to Grand Ronde once a month for medical or dental appointments or enrollment cards. A minimum of three people must sign up. Call Lisa Archuleta at 503-235-4230. You must be an enrolled Grand Ronde Tribal member. The vehicle will leave the Portland office at 8 a.m. Please call in advance for the scheduled monthly date. ■

2010 Tribal Marketplace dates

- Aug. 20-22, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. — Powwow
- Sept. 3-4, 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.; Sept. 5, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- Oct. 1-2, 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.; Oct. 3, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- Nov. 5-6, 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.; Nov. 7, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- Dec. 3-4, 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.; Dec. 5, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Dates subject to change due to conflicting Tribal or SMC events. Located across from Cedar Plank Buffet. For more information, contact Buzz Simmons at 971-226-9799.