

# Conference smooths the way for police force

By Ron Karten

*Smoke Signals staff writer*

As the Grand Ronde Tribe ramps up its first police force, a Jan. 12-13 conference at Spirit Mountain Casino hosted by the Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians lent the effort a helping hand.

Recent state legislation – Senate Bill 412 passed in 2011 – “provides authorized Tribal police officers with certain powers and protections provided to Oregon law enforcement officers.”

In short, the law allows Tribal police to pursue suspects and make arrests off their respective reservation. Simultaneously, it sets up the process for Tribal police to operate under the same requirements as other Oregon police.

Legislators hope that its provisions also will knit together Tribal police forces with local, state and federal police agencies, giving the public seamless police work across many jurisdictions.

Also in 2011, the Grand Ronde Tribe announced the appointment of its first police officer, Tribal member Jake McKnight, who has completed the state's 16-week police academy program and finished his four-month field training with Polk County.

The conference brought together Tribal, federal, state and local police authorities to hear about the requirements of the bill, and about existing police resources that can be made available to Tribal police. The conference also played like a welcoming committee for Tribal police.

“We’re walking through a brand new process together,” said Marilyn Lorance, manager of the Oregon Department of Public Safety Standards and training. DPSST administers training, certification and continuing education requirements of Oregon’s public safety officers.

“The dialogue is going really well,” Lorance said. “Moving forward, it is important to stay in active dialogue.”

“Fundamental to working relationships with county sheriffs,” said Wasco County Sheriff Rick Eiesland, “is familiarity and cooperation.”

Eiesland said the Wasco County Sheriff’s Office has worked with nearby Tribes for more than 20 years.

The change runs counter to traditional police practice, said Ken Reuben, Special Agent-in-Charge for the Oregon Department of Justice’s Criminal Justice Division.

“Sharing is not the way it used to be,” Reuben said. “An informant used to be considered a personal resource, a career builder.”

The new opportunities for Tribal police as a result of SB 412 come in the form of dozens of federal and



Photos by Michelle Alaimo

**Tribal Chairwoman Cheryle A. Kennedy gives a welcome address to attendees of the Senate Bill 412 Implementation Conference at Spirit Mountain Casino on Thursday, Jan. 12. The recently passed bill provides authorized Tribal police officers with powers and protections provided to Oregon law enforcement officers.**

state programs, ongoing undercover operations and Web sites that track countless peoples-of-interest across the country.

In Oregon, intelligence programs range from the Oregon State Intelligence Network to Regional Information Sharing Systems to Analytical Unit Services, and public safety officers throughout the system are encouraged to participate. One program enables safety officers to access information about impending warrants “to see if it may involve one of their cases,” Reuben said.

At the Watch Center, public safety officers in the system have access to “near real-time background checks,” he said. “It’s all Internet driven. You can view it on your desktop.”

Agnes Castronuevo, archaeologist for the Confederated Tribes of the Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians, and Nancy Nelson, Oregon State Parks archaeologist, described crimes covered by the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation and

Archaeological Resources Protection federal laws, and protocols for fighting those crimes.

Adding Tribal police to existing forces in the state dramatically increases jurisdictional questions. Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fisheries Enforcement, for example, with 150 miles of Columbia River to patrol, requires its officers to work with a multitude of other police entities and jurisdictions.

Tim Addleman, police chief for the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, has been on the job for two years. “It took the first year just to figure out who has jurisdiction for different crimes,” he said.

Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fisheries Enforcement officers have to know the laws and customs of the four member Tribes of the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (Yakama, Nez Perce, Umatilla and Warm Springs), of the two states they come from (Washington and Oregon), of jurisdictions and laws covering county sheriffs dotting both sides of the river,

medical examiners on both sides of the river, as well as the laws and customs of other Tribes on both sides of the river.

Jerry Ekker, captain of the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fisheries Enforcement, said that he recently stopped a fishing boat working out of season with three Tribal occupants, all from different jurisdictions. He ended up citing all three for different infractions, and ultimately sent each one to a different court.

Tribal jurisdictions are made more complicated because Tribal lands are not always contiguous. Some are like checkerboards of Tribal and non-Tribal lands. The difficulty of divvying up coverage areas, along with provisions that allow Tribal officers to pursue suspects off-reservation but does not allow other police departments on the reservation led county sheriffs to oppose the legislation, said Eiesland, but the sheriffs are now working with Tribes.

“There are still some differences,” said Eiesland. “It’s the same as medical marijuana. I don’t agree with it, but it’s the law, so how do we make it work?”

Ways to go about reducing worst outcomes and making the most of the new possibilities came down to one idea, repeated over and over during the two-day conference: communication.

“Each Tribe is different,” said Stephanie Striffer, Assistant Attorney General for Oregon, “but the overriding principle is developing relationships.”

While federal and state officials are not certain yet whether new Tribal police departments will increase or decrease their work loads, in Polk County, where the Grand Ronde Tribe has funded the Sheriff’s Office for police coverage by four deputies, Sheriff Bob Wolfe anticipates that the Tribe’s police force will decrease the Sheriff’s call load by 50 percent or more.

“Everything being equal,” he said,

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**Tribal Council member Toby McClary, left, and Jake McKnight, Tribal police officer and Tribal member, attended the Senate Bill 412 Implementation Conference at Spirit Mountain Casino on Thursday, Jan. 12.**

