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Smoke Signals

A Publication of the Grand Ronde Tribe www.grandronde.org

FEBRUARY 1, 2013

UMPQUA ■ MOLALLA ■ ROGUE RIVER ■ KALAPUYA ■ CHASTA

Tribe protests UofO reorganization affecting Native American students

By Ron Karten

Smoke Signals staff writer

The Grand Ronde Tribal Council has drafted a letter expressing its "great alarm and concern" to University of Oregon President Michael Gottfredson regarding a restructuring that has ended the contracts of three top diversity officers, including former Klamath Tribal Chairman Tom Ball.

Ball has served since 2005 as one of three assistant vice presidents in the university's Office of Equity and Inclusion, formerly known as the Office of Equity and Diversity. He was the top Native American diversity administrator at the school.

The Grand Ronde Education Department has worked with Ball for years and the Tribe sees him as a "key liaison" and his position being "of critical importance" to Oregon's nine Tribes, said Grand Ronde Tribal Chairman Reyn Leno.

"Now that his position has been eliminated, many of the concerns from these communities will not be heard," Leno said. He called the potential negative effects to the more than 250 Native students at the university and Oregon's nine Tribal communities "tremendous."

New Equity and Inclusion Vice President Yvette Alex-Assensoh, the apparent architect of the restructuring, recently said in the *Eugene Register-Guard* that her

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Perfect fifth

Photo by Michelle Alaimo

Kyoni Mercier leads the Grand Ronde Canoe Family girls in a paddle dance during the fifth annual Gathering of Oregon's First Nations Powwow held at the Salem Pavilion at the Oregon State Fairgrounds in Salem on Saturday, Jan. 26.

Annual Gathering of Oregon's First Nations Powwow attracts crowds

By Ron Karten

Smoke Signals staff writer

SALEM — Oregon State Fairgrounds' Salem Pavilion was packed on Saturday, Jan. 26, for the 1 p.m. grand entry of the fifth annual

Gathering of Oregon's First Nations Powwow.

Leading grand entry were four Eagle staffs carried by Robert Van Norman, a Tribal Council member for the Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Indians; Warren

Brainard, chief of the Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians; Jack Lenox, Tribal planner

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Pounding home a healthy message



Photo by Michelle Alaimo

Allison Empey goes over a SMART goal that Kailiyah Krehbiel set as Empey works with her and other fifth- and sixth-grade Tribal youth on healthier living at Youth Education on Tuesday, Jan. 15.

Medical student engages Tribal youth in video effort to fight obesity

By Ron Karten

Smoke Signals staff writer

On her way to a medical career in pediatrics, Allison Empey recently spent two months in Grand Ronde. Her stopover ended late in January, but if she has been successful, her work with Tribal fifth- and sixth-graders will carry on.

The fourth-year medical student at the University of California, San Francisco School of Medicine, and Tribal member from McMinnville, is taking a class focused on community engagement.

As part of the class, she needed to bring a community together around a public health issue.

She chose to do it at the Tribe and her students chose to make it about obesity.

The plan was to gain the support of the community. "It is so important to be out here," Empey said.

She consulted with Elders and Tribal staff members for their ideas and support. She recruited almost a dozen fifth- and sixth-grade Youth Education students.

"My goal was to recruit youth and let them come up with the issue," she said. "When you do community engagement, it's important that

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