

# 'The Americans will never leave us alone'

EXHIBIT continued from front page

to have to retell it."

"We Were Here First ... and We Are Here to Stay: Assimilation, Termination and Restoration of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde Community of Oregon" takes Heritage Center visitors through the 1850s Treaty Era to the Termination Era of the 1950s to the Restoration Era of the late 1970s and early '80s up to today as the Tribe prepares to celebrate its 30th anniversary of being restored.

Curated by Land and Culture Department's Exhibits and Archives Program staff members David Lewis, Julie Brown and Veronica Montano, the exhibit begins with the seven treaties signed by the Grand Ronde Tribes that ceded most of western Oregon from the Columbia River to the present-day California-Oregon border to the federal government.

"The Americans will never leave us alone. Let us not concern our hearts ... We will take Grand Ronde. We will make it our own place," one placard quotes Peter Kiani (Kalapuya) as saying in 1877.

As attendees slowly follow the exhibit's chronology, they learn about the Grand Ronde Trail of Tears from a map created by Tribal graphic designer George Valdez, as well as Gen. Phil Sheridan and the Fort Yamhill blockhouse. They view the Grand Ronde Reservation pass book that recorded when Tribal members left the Reservation, where they were going and who they planned to visit. They find out that Native Americans were not considered U.S. citizens until 1924 and were expected to stay on their reservations.

From the 1950s, an Oregonian picture page is headlined "Oregon Indians Express Views on Impending Emancipation," showing the government's spin on Termination had reached the halls of the state's largest newspaper. Pictures of Tribal members John B. (Mose) Hudson and William Simmons are included.

"The Bureau of Indian Affairs, in carrying out its trust responsibility to all members of the Grand Ronde community, has determined that this method represents a fair and equitable process in the disposition of Tribal lands in which the members have an interest," BIA Acting Commission Barton Greenwood is quoted as saying in 1956.

Each Grand Ronde Tribal member received \$35 in 1956 upon Termination. A picture of the Grand Ronde cemetery building represents 30 years of Tribal history as the only Tribal building that existed between 1954 and Restoration in 1983.

Jackie Whisler's 1980's-era grey wool blazer that she wore in October 1983 while testifying before Congress about Restoration leads attendees into the Restoration era, which culminated on Nov.



Photos by Michelle Alaimo

Tribal Council Chairman Reyn Leno looks at a Grand Ronde Agency pass book that is part of the "We Were Here First ... And We Are Here to Stay" exhibit during the Tribal Invitation Opening at the Willamette Heritage Center at The Mill in Salem on Thursday, April 11.



David Lewis, right, Cultural Exhibits and Archives manager and Tribal historian, talks during the Tribal Invitation Opening for "We Were Here First ... And We Are Here to Stay" exhibit at the Willamette Heritage Center at The Mill in Salem on Thursday, April 11. Next to him is Julie Brown, Cultural Interpretive specialist, who curated the exhibit with Lewis and Veronica Montano, Tribal Collections specialist.

22, 1983, when President Ronald Reagan signed the Grand Ronde Restoration Act, renewing federal recognition to the Tribe.

Toward the end of the exhibit, a recently hand-carved canoe and picture collages of Tribal cultural activities, such as basketry, cedar log splitting and Canoe Journeys, testify to the resurgent Tribal culture that continues to blossom 30 years after Restoration.

Also included in the exhibit are the 25th Restoration video created by the Tribe's Public Affairs Department and several copies of

Smoke Signals from the early days when it was typed on letter-sized paper and copied to today's colorful editions on newsprint.

Tribal Council Chairman Reyn Leno said after viewing the exhibit that he learned a few new facts about Tribal history.

"I think the exhibit is awesome," Leno said. "It just seems like everything is coming together for us on our 30-year Restoration. I saw pictures of my grandfather in there, my great-grandfather ... those are the things that really stand out. I really want to thank the people here

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for putting it on. I think the timing was great for our Restoration.

"I, as a Tribal member, learned some stuff. For us who lived it, we hear the stories and we know the stories, but to actually see it documented. It was like when we went to D.C. and we got to look at the actual treaties. It was very, very exciting."

"I think it is very informational," said Tribal Council member Cheryl A. Kennedy. "I like the balance between some of the stark realities in history that happened coupled with some that said, 'I didn't know I was in an era of racism. I thought it was just me.' All of that, I think, weaves together really well."

Following the early opening of the exhibit for invited guests, a formal welcoming ceremony was held. About 30 Tribal members, led by Cultural Outreach Specialist Bobby Mercier and Cultural Education Specialist Brian Krehbiel, opened the event playing drums and singing.

Leno welcomed about 200 people in attendance to the heartland of the Tribe's ceded lands under the Willamette Valley Treaty, and then said he would change the title of the exhibit by adding one word.

"When I saw the title of this ex-

hibit, 'We Were Here First ... and We Are Here to Stay,' I think they left one word out," Leno said. "I think it should have read, 'We Were Here First ... and We Are Here to Stay Forever.'"

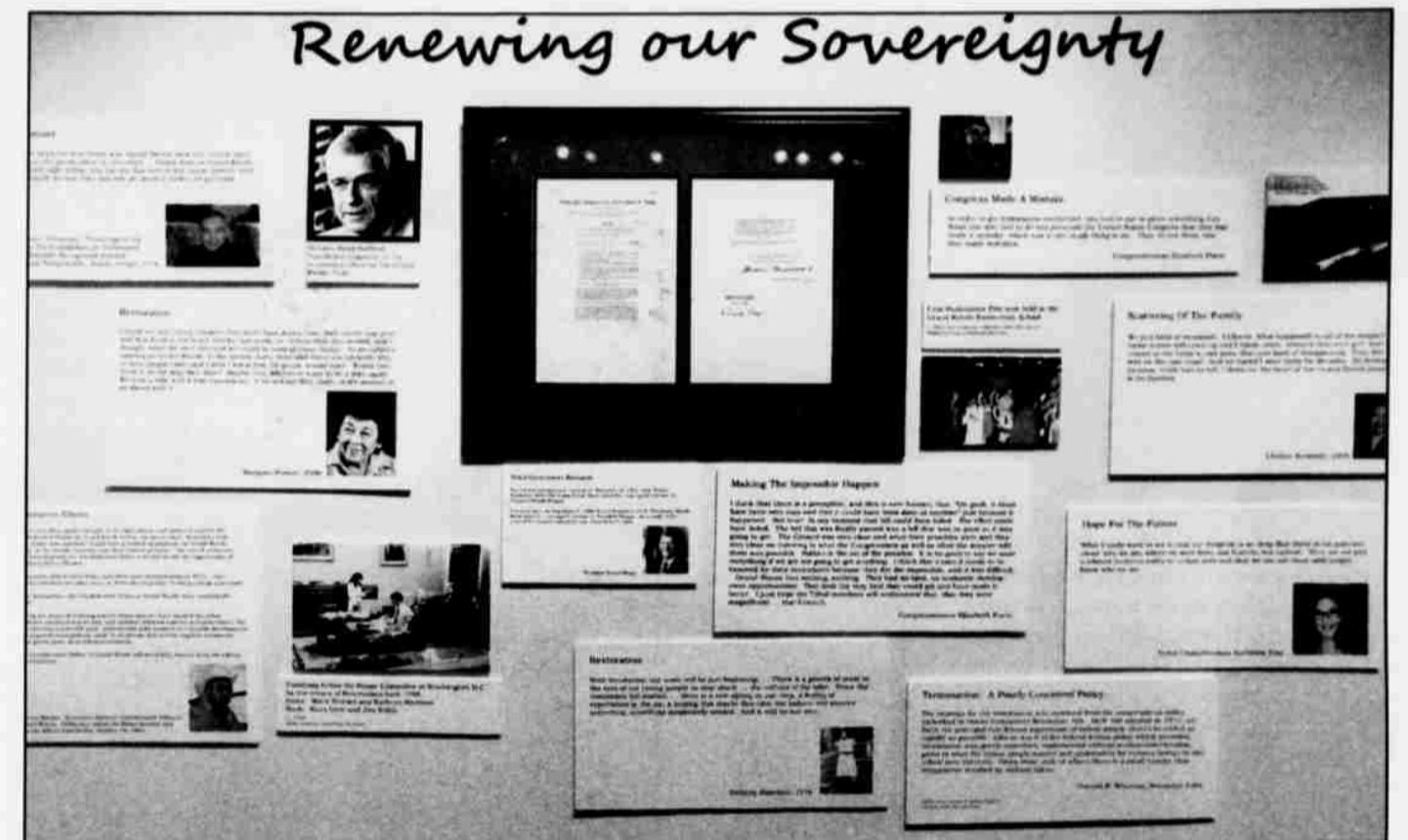
"In my belief we will be in this Willamette Valley forever. We survived 30 years of Termination ... we never quit being Grand Ronde. There is no magic pen that somebody can sign a piece of paper and take away your history and your culture and your traditions. They haven't created that pen. ... We never quit existing and I don't believe that we ever will. Our bloodlines might get thin, but we will be here forever."

Tribal Council member Kathleen Tom, who also is a member of the Willamette Heritage Center Board of Directors, said, "As a board member here, it's really a wonderful honor because we get to bring our story here, our culture, and educate."

"One of things that the Tribe is really thankful for is that we get to open these community discussions so you can learn about the people who were here. All of us love Oregon, but we really don't know about the people who lived here first and those stories, of course, need to come from the Tribe."

Kennedy honored former Oregon Congresswoman Elizabeth Furse, who helped the Grand Ronde Tribe during its Restoration effort in the early 1980s as an employee of Oregon Legal Service's Native American Program.

"She rose to the challenge and helped to lead that effort," Kennedy said. "I just wanted to express appreciation to Congresswoman Elizabeth Furse for her role in bringing us to this point. She still is a great friend to the Tribe."



The "Renewing our Sovereignty" section of the "We Were Here First ... And We Are Here to Stay" exhibit at the Willamette Heritage Center at The Mill in Salem.

Harrison said that it was Tribal Elders who "were the glue that held us together" during the Restoration Era. "We were restored on prayer and the spirituality passed down to us," she said.

Harrison received a standing ovation after her 16-minute presentation that interweaved Tribal history with Restoration effort memories.

Lewis and Brown said putting the exhibit together was a "life-changing" experience.

"These exhibits have been, many times for us, life changing because we're telling important stories we

know resonate pretty well with the whole Tribe," Lewis said. "We can't tell everything; we can't tell the whole story because we have over 5,000 members. Everyone has their own experience with these stories, but we tell what we can. We tell what we can tell."

Lewis said retelling the Tribe's story, particularly how it was terminated, is important because it will prevent it from ever happening again.

"We're not going away," Lewis said.

"We can never, never tell our story enough," Brown added.

The event also was attended by Tribal Council Vice Chair Jack Giffen Jr. and Tribal Council members Toby McClary and Jon A. George, who gave the opening invocation.

The welcoming ceremony was organized by Tribal Public Affairs Director Siobhan Taylor and Acting Public Affairs Secretary Chelsea Clark.

The Grand Ronde exhibit will be on display through Monday, May 27, at the Heritage Center, 1313 Mill St. S.E. For more information, call 503-585-7012 or visit www.willametteheritage.org. ■

## Healthy families



Children take off for the Fun Run that was part of the Healthy Families 3K/5K Run/Walk and Kids Fun Run on the Tribal campus on Saturday, April 27.

Photos by Michelle Alaimo

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Anesia Ainam, right, hands Cohlman Hubbell, 2, with his grandmother Sandy Pond, a medal for finishing the Kids Fun Run that was part of the Healthy Families 3K/5K Run/Walk and Kids Fun Run on the Tribal campus on Saturday, April 27. The event was held in honor of Child Abuse Prevention Month and was sponsored the Tribe's Children & Family Services, Youth Prevention and Recreation departments. After the run/walk, there was lunch and Family Movie Day in the Tribal gymnasium.