

# Tribe hosts ICW conference

By Ron Karten

Smoke Signals staff writer

The 2013 Indian Child Welfare Act conference, "Strengthening Families, Strengthening Nations," aimed at bringing best practices to Tribal child welfare workers who represented all nine of Oregon's federally recognized Tribes and the Smith River Tribe in California.

Those workers met in Grand Ronde for three days of lectures, discussions and sharing of personal experiences from Oct. 22-24. Some 250 filled the Tribal gym where they heard from Indian Child Welfare specialists across Oregon and from Grand Ronde Land and Culture staff.

They heard about best practices in such subjects as moving past historical trauma; vision, courage and spirit values; the importance of knowing who you are; prevention services for youth; suicide prevention; and the value of collaboration.

One statistic that makes Tribal family issues so important, said Lois Day, Tribal Affairs director for the Oregon Department of Human Services, is that Native children are overrepresented among families where state and Tribal welfare workers are forced to intervene.

Successful outcomes, said Dana Ainam, supervisor of Grand Ronde's Children and Family Services program, come when Tribes partner with state, public and private

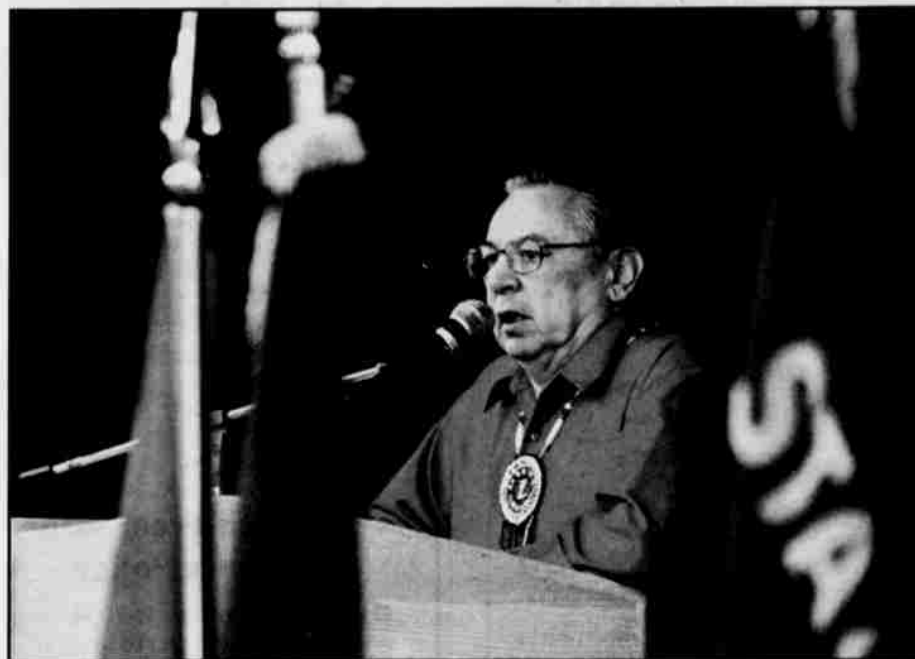


Photo by Michelle Alaimo

**Tribal Council Chairman Reyn Leno gives a welcome address during the opening ceremony of the 2013 Tribal/State annual Indian Child Welfare Act Conference in the Tribal gymnasium on Tuesday, Oct. 22.**

groups.

The conference was co-sponsored by the Grand Ronde Tribe and the state Department of Human Services.

Another successful strategy, said Human Services Director Erinn Kelley-Siel, "is having an appreciation for similarities and a respect for differences." Three other keys for success are vigilance, resources and advocacy, she said.

In regard to resources, she praised a statewide legislative initiative

that gives child welfare programs \$100 million in the state's biennial budget. "People don't invest in programs that are not working," she said.

Recommendations for a study for Gov. John Kitzhaber included a policy that addresses the differences among communities. "We want to make services real for everybody, not just the majority," Kelley-Siel said.

There is now a shift, she said, from an intervention model to a prevention model.

In that regard, Chris Martin, an Indian Child Welfare worker in the Tribe's Social Services Department, described his experiences with the Tribe's family and child welfare program.

He went from a 10-year battle with poverty, addiction and the loss of his children to foster families to recovery and his current position with the Tribe.

"I relapsed pretty hard" within a week after the court allowed unification with his children, who returned home for the first time in 1999, Martin said.

"I totally blew it," he said.

"Now, relapse is a common part of recovery," said Kristi Petite, the Tribe's Child and Family Services lead case worker, who participated

in Martin's case from the beginning. She watched his successes and failures, and when he was back on track, she brought him on board as a Tribal caseworker.

"I never gave up," Martin said.

"The Tribe and the state worked together on this case from day one," said Petite.

Tina Lara, Youth Prevention activity assistant, participated in youth panels, describing connections to the community, culture and youth prevention activities.

Tribal Historian David Lewis, with slides, described the floor plan for Tribe's Chachalu Grand Ronde Tribal Museum and Cultural Center. He also described current and historical Tribal cultural activities.

Land and Culture Manager Jan Looking Wolf Reibach spoke about "the importance of connecting youth with their culture" and said the Tribe is "formulating a strategy to get our lands back."

Tribal Council member Jon A. George gave the invocation on the first day and later added his personal experiences with family and children services over the years.

In addition, George described the traumas that Tribal people have suffered, and that raised the question, "How can we heal our people, culturally and historically?"

In answer, he described a new sacred Atudship site adjacent to the Tribal Cemetery. "Historically, we are stone builders," he said. At the site, those in need will place stones on a mound for healing and forgiveness. The 30th anniversary of Restoration, coming Nov. 22, is a significant time to use the mound and the stones, he added.

Tribal drummers and an honor guard with veterans from many Tribes opened the conference.

Tribal Council Chair Reyn Leno welcomed the group.

"People don't realize who we are," Leno said. "They think we're the casino, but when we drive by the casino we think of the programs we support."

The Tribe has made a significant financial commitment to Tribal child welfare, Leno said. "At the end of the day, it's what's best for our kids." ■



## Flu Clinic

Where: Portland Satellite Office  
4445 S.W. Barbar Blvd. suite 101  
Portland, Oregon 97239

When: Thursday Nov. 7, 2013  
Time: 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

Tribal Elders, spouses and direct descendants only  
Tribal ID and Medical Card required

For more information  
contact Lisa Archuleta at  
503 235-4230



Date: November 14, 2013  
Hours: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.  
Location: Community Center  
9165 Grand Ronde Rd.  
Grand Ronde, OR 97347

Save The Date

Please RSVP @ 503-879-2186 or by email @ julia.brown@grandronde.org  
by November 8, 2013 Lunch will be provided