

Kennedy attends White House Tribal Nations Conference

By Dean Rhodes
Smoke Signals editor

Tribal Council member Cheryle A. Kennedy attended the fifth annual White House Tribal Nations Conference held Wednesday, Nov. 13, at the Department of the Interior in Washington, D.C.

President Barack Obama and 13 Cabinet members joined more than 300 Tribal leaders at the annual event.

"I am proud to work for a president who has demonstrated a lasting and meaningful commitment to upholding a strong government-to-government relationship with Tribal Nations," said Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell in her opening remarks. "This conference is an important part of the ongoing dialogues we need to have as we work together toward Tribal self-determination and self-governance, and promoting prosperous and resilient Tribal nations."

Through speeches and listening sessions, Obama administration representatives highlighted the improving partnership between the U.S. government and Tribal Nations and declared the commitment to elevating that relationship during the final three years of Obama's presidency.

The conference also included a Town Hall portion, during which Tribal leaders asked questions of several members of the White House Council on Native American Affairs, which was established earlier this year.

In the Town Hall's opening state-



Cheryle A. Kennedy

ment, National Congress of American Indians President Brian Cladoosby (Swinomish) said there was a need to establish a "trust relationship for the 21st century" and urged the Council on Native American Affairs to regularly convene Cabinet officials and Tribal leaders at the White House and throughout Indian Country.

Other Tribal leaders addressed the importance of addressing the Carcieri Supreme Court decision that affects what Tribal land can be taken into trust, fully funding contract support costs and honoring the trust responsibility in the federal budget.

Kennedy said during the Nov. 19 Legislative Action Committee meeting that she attended the break-out session on health and made a presentation before the director of Indian Health Service, as well as a representative from the Office of Management and Budget who is assigned to Indian Health Service.

"I focused on contract support costs," Kennedy said, making the point that the United States owes Native Tribes for those funds.

"I directed my comments to him that the United States government owes this amount and that the United States needs to pay," Ken-

nedy said. "There have been court decisions; there's been work groups; there's been directives; there's been all kinds of work done and we understand that it might be capped. Since when does the United States not pay its bills? They do, and we're an honorable nation because of that. So, when you reconvene with your OMB staff, will you carry that message forward ... that we look forward to payment and resolving this whole issue."

In his speech before the Tribal Nations Conference, Obama also addressed the issue. "We've heard loud and clear your frustrations when it comes to the problem of being fully reimbursed by the federal government for the contracted services you provide, so we're going to keep working with you and Congress to find a solution," he said.

Kennedy added that she also talked with Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius about contract support cost payments.

Kennedy, who has served on the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Tribal Advisory Committee for four years, said her term is up at the end of the year.

Administration officials in addition to Jewell who attended the Tribal Nations Conference included Attorney General Eric Holder, Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack, Sebelius, Housing Secretary Shaun Donovan, Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx, Energy

Secretary Ernest Moniz, Education Secretary Arne Duncan, Veterans Affairs Secretary Eric Shinseki, Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Gina McCarthy, Acting Homeland Security Secretary Rand Beers, Acting Small Business Administration Administrator Jeanne Hulit, Council on Environmental Quality Chair Nancy Sutley and White House Domestic Policy Council Director Cecilia Munoz.

Jewell announced that the administration has set a goal of placing more than 500,000 acres into trust by the end of Obama's term. The Bureau of Indian Affairs has processed more than 1,400 land-into-trust applications since 2009, accepting more than 230,000 acres in trust on behalf of Tribes, she said.

"Restoring land to Tribes is not only important to achieve self-determination, but it can also be a spark for economic development in Indian Country - generating investment, new jobs and revenues," Jewell said.

In his remarks to the Tribal Nations Conference, Obama said that he will visit Indian Country in 2014 for the first time as president.

"We have more Tribal leaders here than we ever have at any of these conferences," Obama said. "So it just keeps on growing each year, which is wonderful news. You represent more than 300 Tribal Nations, each of you with your own extraordinary heritage, each a vital part of a shared American family." ■

Elder Bingo moved

Elder Bingo will be held at 12:30 p.m. the second and fourth Saturday of the month at the Elders' Activity Center. For more information, contact Elder Activity Assistant Daniel Ham at 503-879-2233. ■

Annual Tree Lighting Ceremony

Where: Oak Tree at Old Powwow Grounds
When: Dec. 4, 2013
Time: 5:15 p.m.

Community Gathering Including:
Caroling
Refreshments

If you would like to help decorate or donate outdoor lights contact:
Linda Brandon at the EAC
503-879-2233 or
Lisa Leno
503-879-1471

Thank you for respecting Grand Ronde's tribal community and our culture by not displaying gang affiliation or by bringing drugs, alcohol or weapons to this event.

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Help wanted

The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde's 477 Employment and Training Program and Land and Culture Department have resources that can be utilized along with community members who have a passion for gardening or want to learn the art of agriculture.

If you are a Grand Ronde Tribal community member and want to be a part of the planning, preparation and cultivation of the Tribal garden and orchard site for next year's planting season, contact Barbara Gibbons at 800-242-8196, ext. 2135, or e-mail barbara.gibbons@grandronde.org. ■

A Cover Oregon presentation
will be given on this day
Tribal members
please attend

CHRISTMAS

POTLUCK

@ the Portland area office
4445 S.W. Barbur Blvd.
Portland OR 97239

For Questions
call Lisa Archuleta
503-879-1880

Dec. 20, 2013
1 - 4 p.m.

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