

Ann Lewis named co-chair of Tribal-State economic group

By Ron Karten

Smoke Signals staff writer

Ann Lewis, the Tribe's Commercial Real Estate manager, was elected co-chair of the Economic Development and Community Services Tribal cluster on Nov. 15.

Lewis has been attending the group's quarterly meetings since the Government-to-Government Summit held in 2012, and will serve as co-chair for three years.

As with all six clusters, Tribal representatives share chair duties with their state counterparts. In this case, Lewis shares the duties with Lisa Ansell, Strategic Services manager for Business Oregon.

Business Oregon fosters business development in the state and houses the Oregon Arts Commission, the Oregon Cultural Trust and the Oregon Film and Video Office.

"I really like finding out what other Tribes are doing, and working cooperatively," Lewis said. "We look for opportunities where we can work with other Tribes in the future."

As co-chair, Lewis will "work as a liaison for all nine Tribes' Economic Development Cluster representatives, I will co-chair the quarterly meetings and basically continue my role as an Economic Development representative for the Grand Ronde Tribe."

Issues discussed at the November meeting included taxation on Tribal lands, increased broadband capability across the state for public safety, changes to the national flood insur-



Ann Lewis

ance program and bringing outsourced industries back to Oregon while keeping Oregon industries here.

Federal money has been earmarked for infrastructure

projects that will be available to the Grand Ronde Tribe as it develops its new and existing properties.

Lewis described the Tribe's recent investment in Arlington, Wash.-based MicroGREEN Inc., maker of recycled hot and cold cups already being used by Alaska Airlines. The cups are made from recycled water bottles, each good for four cups, and destined to be recycled again.

According to the company Web site, MicroGREEN provides "the plastics industry and the world with environmentally sound plastics technologies that offer substantial economic advantages."

"We're helping with the carbon footprint," said Lewis, "consistent with Tribal values."

She said that the Elder housing project has been completed and a new apartment complex has been approved.

She also reported that the Tribe is remodeling the former Willamina elementary and middle school building, purchased in 2011, into a tourism destination museum. ■

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Face-to-face sessions valued

ROUNDTABLE continued
from front page

tunity.

In the afternoon, according to a plan initiated last fall before the 2012 Government-to-Government Summit, Tribal leaders would speak directly and privately with Gov. John Kitzhaber and state department heads.

That was the story last year, but this year, said Tribal General Manager Mark Johnston, "It was disappointing for the Tribes that illness kept the governor from attending. Still, he said, 'There was plenty of time' for all issues to be aired."

Tribal Council Secretary Toby McClary also said that he values the private, face-to-face session. "It provides an opportunity to enhance the leader-to-leader relationships," he said.

Likewise, Tribal Council member Denise Harvey appreciated the effectiveness of the face-to-face meetings.

In the morning breakout sessions, McClary led the Tribal side of the discussion for the Education Cluster.

"We voiced our appreciation to (Education Deputy Superintendent) Rob Saxton for working to make the state's new Indian Education position a reality," said McClary.

The position had been funded since the early 1980s, discontinued in the early 1990s, though it held a part-time status for a decade, and finally reinstated in this year's biennium budget.

The Tribes had been working to make this happen since the position moved from full-time to part-time in the late 1980s, said April Campbell, formerly the Grand Ronde Tribe's Education Department manager and now the Indian Education Program specialist for the state Education Department.

Among the discussion items, four took center stage: development and inclusion of culturally responsive Native American curricula, ways to close the achievement gap for Native American students, the mascot bill and the Chalkboard Project that is collecting data about the current educational experiences of Tribal students in Oregon.

Regarding curriculum, discussions included a Grand Ronde-created Native American curriculum for fourth-grade students. Its first implementation came this year at Willamina Elementary School.

"Our goal and hope is to have a curriculum for all grades where Tribal students are represented in specific regions across the state. We've created the template," McClary said.

"We explained our position on the mascot bill (SB 215): if there would have been as much effort on an accurate curriculum as on mascots, this wouldn't be an issue."

"They seemed open to exploring ways to accommodate Indian mascots within the state's school districts," he said of the state Education Department.

"It is more important that students are educated in our traditional practices, our culture and beliefs," McClary added, "and an accurate representation (of Oregon's Indian peoples)."

The takeaway for the state, said Campbell, is "the opportunity (the summit made possible) to learn more about individual Tribal education programs and identify Tribal education needs."

"Having April being part of it really helped," said Johnston. "It was a very positive exchange."

Tribal Council Vice Chair Jack Giffen Jr. led the session with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife.

"There were several points of discussion," Giffen said. He expressed the Tribe's gratitude to the Fish and Wildlife Department for allowing the Tribe to take the first salmon of the year at Willamette Falls, a traditional fishing site for the Grand Ronde people.

"We asked to expand on that," Giffen said, "to allow us to build a platform there to net the first salmon. It's a more traditional way."

Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife leaders said they wanted to have discussions on the idea.

There were further discussions on fish, deer and elk habitat.

Tribal Natural Resources Manager Michael Wilson said, "It was very beneficial for Tribal leadership to talk to ODFW Director Roy Elicker directly."

The Tribal department has been working for a year and a half on its largest fish and wildlife plan, setting strategic goals for the Tribe concerning fish and wildlife not just on the reservation, but throughout the Tribe's ceded lands.

"It's a big step toward taking on more responsibility and authority for managing these resources and furthering Tribal sovereignty," Wilson said.

"I believe these conversations with the director are going to be very helpful in getting this wrapped up."

"We're always happy to meet with state officials," Giffen said. "We're always willing to be a partner."

"The Tribal challenge has always been having its voice heard and (at the summit) we were really listened to," said Johnston. ■