

Tribe receives financial award

By Dean Rhodes

Smoke Signals editor

The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde received a Deal of the Year Award at the Native American Finance Officers Association's seventh annual Leadership Awards luncheon held Tuesday, April 15, at the Roosevelt Hotel in New Orleans.

The Tribe was recognized during the association's 32nd annual conference for its \$10 million equity investment in MicroGREEN Polymer's InCycle cups. The Arlington, Wash.-based company created a process to make high-quality cups from recycled water bottles.

In August, the Tribe funded a \$5 million equity investment in MicroGREEN and followed that with a second \$5 million infusion of funding in January. In December, the Tribe loaned \$8 million to Tribally owned Ilihi LLC, which in turn loaned the funds to MicroGREEN.

"NAFOA is recognizing the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde ... for their commitment to environmental sustainability in their investment approach and for their efforts to diversify their investment portfolio, particularly among alternative investments," said the agenda handed out during the luncheon.

"The Tribe's traditional teachings recognize the responsibility of Native people to remain stewards of Mother Earth. By honoring these teachings, the Tribe has made a concerted effort to develop revenue streams that not only provide financially for their people, but also adopt a long-term strategy by looking seven-generations ahead."

Tribal Council Chairman Reyn Leno accepted the award for the Tribe.

"It is a pretty prestigious award for us," Leno said at the April 16 Tribal Council meeting. "It shows that we're heading in the right direction. We have several other investments out there, but this one was recognized as one of the best in Indian Country. It was a \$10 million deal and a great



Submitted photo

Native American Finance Officers Association Treasurer Kim Peone, right, presented the Grand Ronde Tribe with a Deal of the Year Award during the group's 32nd annual conference held April 14-15 in New Orleans. The Grand Ronde Tribe was recognized for its \$10 million equity investment in MicroGREEN Polymers in Arlington, Wash. The company makes InCycle cups from recyclable plastic bottles. Representing the Tribe at the conference were, from left, Finance Officer Julio Martinez, Economic Development Director Titu Asghar, Tribal Council member Denise Harvey and Tribal Council Chairman Reyn Leno.

investment. It seems to be really picking up speed and it falls in line with our culture of staying green. If you take care of Mother Earth, Mother Earth takes care of you."

"Their investments have enabled us to buy equipment that will allow us to re-extrude (recycled plastic into the plastic sheets from which InCycle cups are manufactured). It is because they are stewards of the environment just like we are that the Tribes have invested," said MicroGREEN Chief Executive Officer Tom Malone.

"It is a great win for us to be recognized by NAFOA for our decision to invest in MicroGREEN," said Tribal Economic Development Director Titu Asghar. "This strategy of investment is the future, representing an innovative shift in financial diversification for us."

"We are looking ahead several generations to create an economically sustainable future, supporting clean technology that helps correct

wasteful practices with environmentally sound products that are simply better in performance."

MicroGREEN's technology allows it to be a low-cost producer in very large and highly cost-sensitive applications, the first of which are beverage cups, a \$7 billion market in North America.

Three airlines – Alaska, Allegiant Air and Virgin America – have been using InCycle cups. Recently, United Airlines replaced their foam cups with InCycle cups. Other airlines are in talks with MicroGREEN.

Malone said that 60 percent of MicroGREEN's new production capacity at the Arlington plant is already committed.

Representing the Tribe at the annual conference were Asghar, Leno,

Tribal Council member Denise Harvey, Assistant Tribal Attorney Kim D'Aquila and outgoing Tribal Finance Officer Julio Martinez.

In addition, the Oregon Native American Business and Entrepreneurial Network, based in Portland, received the Education Program of the Year award for its Entrepreneurial Empowerment Outreach program, which uses the "Indianpreneurship" curriculum to further business development initiatives throughout Indian Country.

The Grand Ronde Tribe was one of the four Oregon Tribes instrumental in the founding of ONABEN in the early 1990s. ■

Includes information from Indian Country Today.

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Judy's daughter

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Arena Director Jason Stacona
Host Drum Southern Express
Honor Drum Stonechild

Friday Grand Entry 7:00 pm
Saturday Grand Entry 1:00 pm and 7:00 pm
Saturday Dinner 5:00 pm - 6:30 pm
Sunday Salmon Bake 12:00 pm at University of Oregon Many Nations Longhouse

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