

A time to give thanks

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Before the activities began, members of the Grand Ronde drum group, 14 strong this year, Tribal Council Secretary Toby McClary, former Tribal Council member Wink Soderberg and his wife, Kathy, other Tribal members and guests congregated around the fire in conversation.

Brian Krehbiel and Jordan Mercier were first to stoke the fires, a plum job that circulated among singers and drum players.

Soon, the group numbered about 50, which held steady for the hour-long program.

Bobby Mercier said that the event was meant for fun and dance, and to “let our ancestors know that we’re singing and dancing for them. It’s not just about Restoration and the papers we signed, but everything our ancestors have done for us, a commemoration to remember and give thanks to those who came before.”

Speaking first in Chinuk Wawa, Bobby Mercier said, “It’s always good that we come together. On days like this, our hearts become full again.”

The singing and dancing, he said, “Let’s our ancestors know that we haven’t forgotten them. And I’m always glad to see the children here. It gives them the understanding that they are part of something bigger.”

Drummers and dancers, including the women of the Grand Ronde Canoe Family, performed a paddle dance, salmon dance, a dance honoring people coming together, a memorial dance, a dance honoring new beginnings and a dance for ancestors.

After the plankhouse ceremony, lunch and the Restoration Powwow were held in the Tribal gym. By noon, the gym was filled and everybody was saving seats. As more Tribal members arrived, it looked like it was going to be standing room only.

Tribal Council Chair Reyn Leno and Tribal Council member Jon A. George gave introductions. Tribal Elder and former Tribal Council member Steve Bobb Sr. offered the invocation.

Grand Ronde Royalty performed “The Lord’s Prayer.” Royalty included Senior Miss Grand Ronde Promise Rimer, Junior Miss Grand Ronde Iyana Holmes, Little Miss Grand Ronde Isabelle Grout, Senior Veterans Queen Savannah Ingram, Junior Veterans Queen Amelia Mooney and princesses Kaleigha



Photos by Michelle Alaimo

Above, dancers fill the dance arena during an InterTribal dance of the 31st Restoration Powwow held in the Tribal gym on Saturday, Nov. 22. At left, Jordan Mercier dances with his daughter Ila during an InterTribal dance.



where many in the crowd walked up and thanked them for their efforts. An honor dance also was held in their name.

Tribal Council member Jon A. George introduced current and past Tribal Council members in attendance.

“Restoration should be called the day the government made a mistake,” Leno said. “Sixty years ago was one of the worst days, Termination Day. But it meant nothing to my family. It was never about benefits, not about a check. It’s about being

proud of who we are.”

Tribal leaders also cited recent Tribal accomplishments.

From Sunday, Nov. 16, through Wednesday, Nov. 19, a Tribal delegation traveled to Washington, D.C., where they worked with Oregon’s congressional delegation to move forward an amendment to the Grand Ronde Reservation Act. When passed, the amendment guarantees that Tribally purchased land within the boundaries of the Tribe’s original reservation will become Tribal Reservation land instead of trust land.

The delegation included Tribal Chair Reyn Leno, Vice Chair Jack

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Senior Miss Grand Ronde Promise Rimer braids Grand Ronde Princess Hailey Lewis-Little’s hair during the 31st Restoration Powwow held in the Tribal gym on Saturday, Nov. 22.

