



2010 – The Tribe received a \$325,000 grant to help expand the Tribal Library from its current size of 1,390 square feet. The Indian Community Development Block Grant will help pay for the addition of 1,500 square feet, addressing one of the more pressing needs on the Tribal campus.



File photo

2005 – A satellite office in Eugene opened at 711 Country Club Road. Tribal member Brenda Tuomi led the local effort to find and lease the 1,200-square-foot office, which includes a large entry/gathering room, small conference room, computer lab and two offices.

2000 – Robert Watson was named interim chief executive officer and president of Spirit Mountain Casino. Watson was hired to lead the casino after Bruce Thomas resigned to work for Spirit Mountain Management & Consulting Inc., another Grand Ronde Tribal enterprise. Watson had to take a leave of absence from his post as chair of the Grand Ronde Gaming Commission.

1995 – Tribal Chairman Mark Mercier spoke at American University in Washington, D.C. He was invited as a guest speaker by the Washington College of Law chapter of the Native American Law Students Association. The topic of the symposium was “The Republican Congress: Federal Indian Policy for a New Millennium.”

1990 – Tribal Council members Mark Mercier, Kathryn Harrison and Candy Robertson and staff members Greg Archuleta and Jim Willis traveled to Washington, D.C., to meet with officials of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Indian Health Service and legislative representatives regarding youth services, child welfare, health service, forestry and other issues affecting the Tribe. As gifts, they took along Tillamook cheese, a Tribal calendar and smoked salmon prepared by Jim Butler.

1985 – *Smoke Signals* and Tribal archives do have a copy of the February 1985 edition.

Yesteryears is a look back at Tribal history in five-year increments through the pages of Smoke Signals.

Opportunity knocks



Photo by Michelle Alaimo

Misty Carl, Tribal Employment Rights Office Workforce Development specialist, talks during the Opportunity 101 workshop held in the Adult Education building on Thursday, Feb. 12. The free workshop was designed to help Tribal and community members with attaining and retaining jobs. Included in the workshop was a history of the Tribe's Vocational Rehabilitation/477 Program and the opportunities it offers, and an introduction to what TERO is and how it can help with employment opportunities at Tribal businesses and outside organizations. The workshop was sponsored by the Tribe's VR/477 Program, Tribal Employment Rights Office and Human Resources Department, Spirit Mountain Casino Human Resources and Grand Ronde Station. These departments will continue to work together to bring additional trainings to Tribal members and employees.

Certified Application Assister sets dates

Certified Application Assister Loretta Meneley will be at the Tribe's Portland office, 4445 S.W. Barbur Blvd., from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Tuesday, March 10 and 24, to provide information and answer questions about applying for an exemption from the shared responsibility payment, as well as to sign up members for private health insurance.

For more information, contact Meneley at 503-879-1359 or by e-mail at loretta.meneley@grandronde.org. ■

Riggs wants to maintain excitement, variety

EDUCATION continued from front page

and to reinvigorate worthwhile projects that have stalled.

Top of the list, he says, is a federal Administration for Native Americans' Chinuk Wawa language grant. “I'm very excited about it,” he says.

Bringing in grants and other new funding sources, creating new opportunities for the department and expanding the availability of a solid educational foundation for the Tribal membership are among the jobs on his desk. While the department already partners with institutions, Riggs says he wants to find new partners and new associations to broaden possibilities for the membership.

“The department is in very good shape,” he says. “Folks with responsibility for keeping it running have done an exceptional job.”

The Tribe's revival of Chinuk Wawa, the Native trade language, has been an influence on Riggs since his days at the University of Oregon and before. While schooling in Eugene, he traveled up to the Tribe every week to study the language. His growing fluency in Chinuk Wawa enabled him to use it to fulfill the university's second

language requirement.

It also gave him direction in his career at the Tribe. He saw the chance to use language instruction in the education of Tribal “children and families, and for the revitalization of a moribund language.”

At the University of Oregon, he says, he discovered his love of academia. He calls himself a “lifelong learner, until it's over.”

He had an inclination to stay in the university setting, but in the end thought a job might also be in order.

“I've always had a lot of respect for education,” Riggs says, “especially the way things are going in the world. An associate degree is taking the place of a high school diploma.”

In 2005, a month after he graduated, he started as a Cultural Education specialist at the Tribe. As a teacher in the Head Start and Chinuk Wawa programs, he says, his fluency improved. He “saw a lot of value in what folks here were trying to do.”

He brings to the job more than a decade as a rock ‘n’ roll musician. He drummed his way through 30 countries, including villages in Spain and Germany, and big venues in cities like Los Angeles,

London, Tokyo and Stockholm. He played with all manner of rock ‘n’ roll artists and bands. He continues to play locally.

One of the songs he co-wrote, “Cold Wind,” was part of the soundtrack of “Looking for Johnny,” about Johnny Thunders, a musician with the New York Dolls. The movie played in major cities across the United States and now is available on DVD.

From the road, he says he took away a lot of lessons, and some directly apply to his new position.

“You learn how to deal with all kinds of people, personalities,” he says. Traveling, he takes in the architecture, scenery, new languages, different thoughts and ideas, religions, belief systems and governments, and the various ways that people interact with them.

“Some situations are dangerous,” he says of the road. “At times you put yourself in precarious places, and you learn how to navigate all that.”

Along the way, he worked as head chef at Fluke's Cradle, a North African restaurant in London. On the menu was “a lot of fish, very much a Mediterranean diet.” His days started early.

“You go to market, look for quality, haggle over price. There's a

lot to do. Inventory, staff rotation, dealing with personalities. Everyone wants to be head chef, and they want to know why did you get the job.

“I have led a very exciting and varied life,” he says, “and have been fortunate in so many ways. My hope is that I can maintain that excitement and variety in my new role as Education Division manager. I am very passionate about learning and hope that is apparent to all I work with in this endeavor.”

He credits all of his program leaders for their diligence during the period when John Harp, Continuing Education coordinator, took over as acting manager.

Mercedes Reeves, he says, kept higher education counseling going. Tim Barry carried and continues to carry “a big load” at Youth Education. Interim Assistant General Manager Bryan Langley and Tribal Council Chief of Staff Stacia Martin, Riggs' supervisor, have been overseeing all aspects of the operation.

Riggs still writes songs and poetry. These days, he says, “mostly, the poetry I write is in building blocks with my 2-year-old.”

Riggs and wife, Heather, live in Salem and are parents to four children. ■