

Crossing set to open Sept. 12

ARTWORK continued
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outer ring, referencing the Earth.

Tilikum Crossing, set to open on Sept. 12, will carry light rail and streetcar trains, buses, bicyclists and pedestrians, but no private vehicles. It will, according to TriMet, improve transit in a corridor that extends from the terminus of the MAX Green and Yellow lines at Portland State University in downtown Portland to the south waterfront area, southeast Portland, Milwaukie and the north Clackamas County area.

In April 2014, the Grand Ronde Tribe's suggested name for the bridge was selected from four finalists out of hundreds of nominations.

The gifting ceremony, held on a beautiful, cloudless spring day, began at 10 a.m. with TriMet General Manager Neil McFarlane inviting Grand Ronde drummers to open the event. Tribal Council member Jon A. George joined Tribal members Bobby Mercier, Jordan Mercier, David Harrelson, Archuleta, Jan Looking Wolf Reibach, Shannon Simi and Chelsea Clark, as well as Chinook Nation Chairman Sam Robinson, in drumming and singing.

George then gave the invocation before several hundred people in attendance.

"What an honor it is to be recognized as the people of the area," George said. "Our ancestors are looking down upon us, saying how proud they are."

"We're honored here today to accept these beautiful art pieces that speak to the long history of Native Americans in our region," McFarlane said.

"Art connects us and that is one of the reasons TriMet has always had an art program associated with its projects, but it doesn't just connect those of us who are here today. It connects us to our past and to our future, and it's that speaking to the past and future that makes these art pieces so particularly touching."

McFarlane said the location of the artwork is historically appropriate since the Willamette River has connected everyone who has lived in the region for thousands of years.

"Tilikum is a name that honors the Chinookan-speaking people of this basin who have literally lived here since time immemorial," McFarlane said. "Tilikum symbolizes our coming together. So, like this bridge, our connections as a transit rider, a pedestrian, a cyclist all come together today, and with this art it connects this project to an important story and important part of this region's history."

"Today, for me, is really about one word: Respect," said Portland Mayor Charlie Hales. "It is about re-



Photos by Michelle Alaimo

Tribal Council members Jon A. George, left, Denise Harvey, second from left, and Tonya Gleason-Shepek, right, gift Chinook artist Greg A. Robinson a Tribal Pendleton blanket during the gifting ceremony for the artwork that Robinson created to decorate Tilikum Crossing in Portland on Friday April 17.



spect for the river; it's about respect for history, for the Native peoples whose land this is and was, and for the connections between that history and all of the others who have come to this city, now moving here from all over the world, bringing other cultures. And those people need to know about this history, about these connections and about this place."

Hales said that people today can honor the river and its history with a combination of beautiful modern-day architecture, design and public art. "That's why we're here," he added.

"I am thankful for this opportunity that we have, as the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, to be in this honorable place to present art to the beautiful city of Portland," Tribal Council member Cheryl A. Kennedy said. "We are thankful for the partnership we have with TriMet; thankful for the partnership we have with the city of Portland and Mayor Hales.

"Tilikum Crossing, for us, really

represents the bridging of peoples who come to this land and the name is very fitting. We're very thankful for that name. We know that it not only bridges the river here, but it bridges many of the disparities that came with the many different difficulties that this area was experiencing. So, as we return as the peoples of this land, we are very grateful for this opportunity.

"Today, we honor our ancestors with this gift," Kennedy added. "Today, this opportunity provides what we hope is the beginning of the recognition of the traditional art forms of our ancestors."

"This art would not exist without the generous sponsorship of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde," Greg Robinson said.

Robinson thanked Archuleta, whose family tolerated the racket and noise for about a year as the carvings were created.

Robinson explained the symbols in the carvings and medallion, such as the cascading salamanders representing the waterfalls in the

From left, Tribal Council member Jon A. George, Jan Looking Wolf Reibach, Bobby Mercier, Jordan Mercier, Chinook Nation Chairman Sam Robinson, David Harrelson and Greg Archuleta drum and sing during the gifting ceremony for the artwork "We Have Always Lived Here" at Tilikum Crossing in Portland on Friday April 17.

Columbia River Gorge and the five faces at the base of the carvings representing the Chinookan peoples of the past, present and future.

"That is really the core element of these pieces," he said. "The continuance, the survival and prospering into the future."

Robinson said the installation of the artwork is about "having a permanent testament to the survival and ongoing culture of the Chinookan people who still live here in the Portland metro area.

"I hope that it will help to serve and inspire the future generations of artists and cultural people, that Chinookans will continue to grow and thrive into the future. ... It is just a testimony to us being here."

After the speeches, George and Tribal Council members Denise Harvey and Tonya Gleason-Shepek gifted dentalium-cedar rose necklaces made by George to McFarlane and Hales, and enveloped Robinson in a Tribal Pendleton blanket.

Grand Ronde drummers closed the ceremony as pedestrians and bicyclists were already stopping at the eastside basalt carving and medallion to admire their beauty.

Other Tribal employees and members who attended the event included Elders Dolores Parmenter and Ann Lewis, Tribal Council Chief of Staff Stacia Martin, Tribal Planner Rick George and Tribal Attorney Rob Greene. ■