

# 'This is totally about the kids'

**FLAG continued from front page**

hang the Tribal flag, with the money split evenly between academics and athletics.

Johnson drew support from board member Ken Onstott, who said hanging the Tribal flag could be “semi-divisive,” but Johnson’s proposal also received incredulous comments from others in the audience.

Johnson said in a later phone interview that the contract was something he mentioned as an idea.

“I just kind of threw it out there just as an idea,” Johnson said. “Personally, I think that Old Glory there, the United States of America flag, pretty much covers everybody here and that should be sufficient. ... Some part of me is, you know, if we starting hanging that flag in there, then what other group is going to want to hang a flag? Are we going to hang a German flag in there? Are we going to hang a Swedish flag in there? Are we going to hang a Spanish flag in there? And that is why I kind of believe that the United States flag covers us all, I think, fairly well.”

According to a recent interagency agreement between the Grand Ronde Tribe and the Willamina School District, 267 out of the district’s 852 students – 31.4 percent – identify as Native American.

Forster said some attendees at the April meeting, as mentioned by Johnson, wondered why the U.S. flag is not sufficient to cover every student attending district schools while others countered that the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde is a sovereign Indian nation, one of nine federally recognized in Oregon.

Forster said he personally has no opinion on the Tribal flag request. “It’s the board’s decision,” he said.

Elsewhere in Oregon, school districts near Tribal sovereign nations with substantial populations of

Native American students display the nearby Tribe’s flag in their facilities.

In the Pendleton School District, where 22 percent of the students self-identify as Native American, the Umatilla Tribal flag hangs in the high school gym and at Sunridge Middle School. A spokesperson said the district hopes to have the Umatilla flag flying in all five of its elementary schools by the end of this school year or the start of next.

In Madras, the Jefferson County School District serves 2,900 students, 33 percent of whom self-identify as Native.

“We do hang the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs flag in our facilities,” said Superintendent Rick Molitor in an e-mail. “The CTWS flag is found in our school board of directors’ board room, our gym at Madras High School and it flies alongside the American flag at the front, in the gym and in every classroom at the Warm Springs K-8 Academy.”

Although the Tribe does not pay property taxes on trust or reservation land, it does monetarily support the Willamina School District in many other ways.

The interagency agreement between the district and Tribe allocates up to \$20,000 to the Willamina School District annually for the purpose of funding a school district project for a specified calendar year.

Tribal Council recently approved an \$8,300 donation to purchase and install a track and field scoreboard at the high school.

During the most recent round of Willamina school bond elections, full-page ads supporting the measures appeared numerous times for free in the Tribal newspaper, *Smoke Signals*. A full-page ad costs \$435.

Since 1997, the Tribe’s philanthropic arm, Spirit Mountain Community Fund, has awarded nine grants worth \$577,875 to the Wil-

lamina School District. The most recent, \$50,000 awarded in 2011, helped fund a six complex classroom/multipurpose building on the school district’s Oaken Hills campus.

In March, the Tribe’s Dental Clinic staff examined 211 Willamina students during the Give Kids a Smile Day event. Half of the students who were screened for cavities, had their teeth cleaned and received a fluoride varnish were not Native Americans.

The Tribe also has provided a Tribally created curriculum on Grand Ronde history that is being taught to fourth-graders in the school district and Tribal employees teach Chinuk Wawa language classes at the high school, helping Native students satisfy their second language credit requirements.

Because of the Tribe’s interest in working collaboratively in government-to-government relationships, the Grand Ronde Tribal flag now flies at the State Capitol in Salem and at the University of Oregon in Eugene and Western Oregon University in Monmouth.

“This is totally about the kids,” Tribal Council Chairman Reyn Leno said. “As a lifelong resident of Willamina, it’s not about the Tribe purchasing a relationship with the school district, it’s about the kids.”

Johnson said that he wants to meet with Tribal representatives to discuss the relationship between the Willamina School District and the Tribe and to better understand what financial aid the district can

apply for from the Grand Ronde Tribe. He added that he did not want the postponement of the flag decision to be interpreted as being anti-Tribe or anti-Native American.

“I think that what we wanted to do, the reason we did not vote on it, is because we wanted to kind of discuss this and kind of find out some more information of what’s out there,” he said. “It was just put to us as a vote and we hadn’t heard anything about it. We didn’t know anything about it until we got our board packet. We hadn’t heard any inkling that this was going to maybe come about. That’s the reason we tabled it, so we could find out some more. Is there more schools that have Tribal flags in their schools? What process did they go through? You know, kind of check all of our avenues to make sure that whatever decision we go with that we’re doing it correctly on correct information. ... I just want to make sure that we’re doing the right thing.”

Fasana, who made the original request, is a graduate of Willamina High School and parent of a current student.

“I was extremely shocked and disappointed in the board’s reaction to my request,” she said. “I look forward to providing the board with information that may address their questions or concerns. I am hopeful we can reach a resolution to the matter at the next board meeting.”

The May 12 meeting starts at 7 p.m. in the district library. ■

**Farmers Market!**

**When: May 16, June 20, July 18, August 8, September 12, October 10**

**Time: 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.**

**Where: Back parking lot of the C-Store**

\*The Community Garden will have a booth and then we are opening 5 other booths for Tribal member families at the low cost of \$20 per Farmers Market. It will be first-come, first-served to sign up for booth.

\*If you are interested in having a space, please contact Kristy DeLoe 503-879-2018 or Patti LeClaire 503-879-2247

\*Funds received from booth rentals will go back to the Food Sustainability Project and Community Garden

\*Each person is responsible for supplying their own tables, tent, etc.

Ad created by George Valdez

The community is invited to a free event!

## Stride in Her Moccasins

Saturday, May 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2015

**10 – 11am** – Sign-up at the CTGR Tribal Gym During registration enjoy free T-shirts while supplies last.

**11 – 11:45** – Stride in Her Moccasins will start (less than 5km walk)

**11:45 – 12:30** – Prizes for best costumes, fastest times, snacks at the CTGR Tribal Gym

Participants are encouraged to dress up! Males dress as females, females dress as males- aka mustaches are encouraged!

Questions or concerns contact: Anne Falla 503 879 1660 or Kendra Steele 503 879 1921

Interactive game “In Their Shoes” set-up during registration for community members to better understand issues facing our community.

Take 45 minutes of your time to show your community support against domestic and sexual violence by walking in the other halves shoes!

Please tell us what you think about equal access to ODOT contracting opportunities.

**We’re listening.**

ODOT is conducting a study analyzing whether minority- and women-owned businesses have equal access to contracting opportunities within Oregon’s transportation contracting industry and with ODOT’s own contracts. The findings will help us operate the federal **Disadvantaged Business Enterprise Program**.

Here’s how you can be involved, ask questions and speak up:

- Visit our **website**: [www.odotdbestudy.org](http://www.odotdbestudy.org)
- Call our **hotline**: 503-660-8865
- Email us: [info@odotdbestudy.org](mailto:info@odotdbestudy.org)

**Oregon Department of Transportation**

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