

Casino hosts quarterly Health Board meeting

By Dean Rhodes

Smoke Signals editor

Thirty-one delegates to the Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board participated in the organization's quarterly meeting held at Spirit Mountain Casino from Tuesday, April 21, through Thursday, April 23.

The Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board was established in 1972 and includes delegates from the 43 federally recognized Tribes in Oregon, Washington and Idaho.

Health Board delegates meet quarterly to create and update a strategic plan, which covers four main areas: health promotion and disease prevention, legislative and policy analysis, training and technical assistance, and surveillance and research.

Grand Ronde Tribal Council member Cheryle A. Kennedy is the Tribe's longtime delegate to the Health Board and currently serves as its vice chairwoman. Before becoming a Tribal Council member, Kennedy was at the helm of the Tribe's burgeoning health programs in the 1980s.

The meeting opened Tuesday, April 21, with Health Board Chairman Andy Joseph (Colville) calling the meeting to order. Grand Ronde Tribal Council member Jon A. George gave the invocation and he then joined Land and Culture employees Jan Looking Wolf Reibach, Brian Krehbiel and Jordan Mercier in drumming as the Grand Ronde Honor Guard posted the colors.

The Honor Guard included Grand Ronde Elders Alton Butler carrying the eagle staff, Steve Bobb Sr. with the U.S. flag, Jerry George with the Tribal flag, Ronda Metcalf (Sauk-Suiattle) carrying the POW/MIA flag and Al Miller carrying the Oregon flag.

Tribal Council Chairman Reyn Leno welcomed the delegates to Grand Ronde and Spirit Mountain Casino.

"It's great to see all of our Tribes together," Leno said. "I wish we could come together more to work on common goals. I've been on Tribal Council for about 20 years and health care has always been one of the primary things in Indian Country."

Leno recounted how he was 4 years old when the Grand Ronde



Photos by Michelle Alaimo

Hal Mitchell, a doctor at the Grand Ronde Health and Wellness Center, right, talks about the medical clinic to a group of Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board quarterly board meeting attendees as they tour the clinic with Tribal Council member Cheryle A. Kennedy, left, on Tuesday, April 21. Kennedy is the vice chairwoman on the Health Board.

Tribal Council Chairman Reyn Leno gives a welcome speech at the beginning of the Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board quarterly board meeting held at Spirit Mountain Casino on Tuesday, April 21. The meeting ran through Thursday, April 23.

Tribe was terminated in 1954 and there was no health care for Tribal members for almost 30 years.

"During Restoration, one of the first things, one of the most important things for our people was health care because we really didn't have anything of that nature," he said. "When we got restored and started getting health care, that was so amazing for our people because we had nothing else."

Leno also honored Kennedy, who has served on the Health Board as the Grand Ronde delegate for many years.

He also urged other Tribes to work with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to establish memorandums of understanding so that their Tribal clinics can provide health care to veterans – Native and nonNative – and also receive reimbursements.

"But, especially, I want to acknowledge all of you people for getting every dollar we can. You know, it was promised to us in our treaties. I would say they probably



have not met that goal. But it's you people who make the difference in trying to make sure that we do get those dollars and make sure we put them in the right place."

Following the welcoming, delegates got down to work.

Indian Health Service Portland Area Director Dean Seyler (Warm Springs) and Indian Health Board Executive Director Jon Finkbonner (Lummi) gave their respective reports.

Seyler announced that a listening session with Indian Health Service Acting Director Robert McSwain, originally scheduled to be held during the Grand Ronde meeting, was rescheduled to July 23.

During Finkbonner's report, he recognized Leslie Wosnig (Suquamish) as the Health Board's Delegate of the Year and Stephanie Craig-Rushing, director of the Red Talon Project, as the Health Board's Employee of the Year.

The Red Talon Project helps member Tribes combat the spread of sexually transmitted diseases, AIDS and HIV.

Throughout the two-day meeting, delegates were briefed on numerous health issues affecting Native Americans.

On Tuesday morning, delegates discussed re-authorization of the Special Diabetes Programs for Indians and then held a working lunch where they heard from the Health Board's myriad committees: Elders, Veterans, Public Health, Behavioral Health, Personnel and Legislative/Resolution.

In the afternoon, Karen Quigley, executive director of the Oregon Legislative Commission on Indian Services, addressed the delegates. There also was a presentation on social media and cyberbullying by Craig-Rushing, who was accompanied Nikita Midamba and Jesse Gritton of Seattle Children's Hospital.

Later on Tuesday, delegates toured the Grand Ronde Health and Wellness Center, the Tribal campus and achaf-hammi, the Tribal plankhouse. That evening, a Tribal dinner sponsored by the Grand Ronde Tribe was served at Spirit Mountain Casino.

Wednesday proved just as busy a day. After Kennedy called the meeting to order, delegates received a legislative update, heard

about oral health disparities among American Indian and Alaska Native youth, were briefed on the Health Board's Sexual Assault Prevention Program and participated in an all-Tribes discussion regarding the federal government's fiscal year 2016 budget.

The meeting wrapped up on Thursday morning with Joseph giving his Chairman's Report and with committee reports and handling of Health Board business, such as approval of minutes.

In addition to Leno, Kennedy and George, Tribal Council Vice Chair Jack Giffen Jr., Secretary Toby McClary and Tribal Council members Denise Harvey, Ed Pearsall and Tonya Gleason-Shepek attended the Tuesday morning session to welcome delegates.

Health Committee members Gladys Hobbs, Alan Ham and Bernadine Shriver also attended, as well as Health Services Executive Director Jeff Lorenz, General Manager Dawn Doar, Tribal Council Chief of Staff Stacia Martin and Tribal Planner Rick George. ■

Strengthening Wounded Survivors

Our community healing, building on our strength. Our circle invites the community to join in healing current or past trauma.

Our goals of the nine-week course involve processing and forgiving violence that has personally happened to us. Past hurts to current unhealthy or abusive relationships ... we encourage all people to come and join together in healing.

Following White Bison, Mending Broken Hearts curriculum, we hope to use traditional methods of healing for Native communities. We know our community carries strong values and beliefs that aid in our healing from the multigenerational trauma we have experienced up until current-day hurts.

Generally, domestic violence is a pattern of behavior, including physical violence or sexual violence, by an intimate current or former partner. It is seen in male/female and same sex partner relationships. Domestic violence takes many forms and includes a range of actions intended to control: isolation, intimidation, using children, emotional abuse, economic abuse, coercion and threats, minimizing, denying and blaming, cultural abuse, ritual abuse, sexism and sexual abuse. Sexual violence takes many forms as well but all acts are intended to control the survivor without their consent or their ability to give consent.

Join us and take a nine-week journey as we discuss completing relationships and completing trauma that has not been resolved.

Location: Grand Ronde Housing Authority, 28450 Tyee Road, Grand Ronde, OR 97347

Dates: April 13th thru June 15th (each Monday evening)

Times: 5:30-7 p.m.

Ages: 18+ (male or female trauma survivors)

For questions or comments, contact Anne Falla, office 503-879-1660 or 24 hours 971-832-0730

Oregon State slates salmon bake, powwow

The 17th annual salmon bake will be held from noon to 3 p.m. Friday, May 15, at the Native American longhouse Eena Haws at Oregon State University in Corvallis.

On Saturday, May 16, the powwow will be held with grand entries at 1 and 7 p.m.

For more information, contact the longhouse at 541-737-2738 or via e-mail at nativeamericanlonghouse@oregonstate.edu. ■