

Tribe helps celebrate 'model' for states

By Dean Rhodes

Smoke Signals editor

SALEM – Gov. Kate Brown called the Oregon Legislative Commission on Indian Services a “national model” for state government interactions with Tribal sovereign nations during the commission’s 40th anniversary celebration held Thursday, May 14, in the State Capitol rotunda.

Brown was the final speaker during an 80-minute ceremony that honored Oregon’s trailblazing method of including the nine federally recognized Tribes within its boundaries in state government.

The Legislative Commission on Indian Services was created by statute in 1975 to improve services to Native Americans in Oregon. Its 13 members – nine Tribal and two each from the Oregon House and Senate – are appointed jointly by the president of the Oregon Senate and speaker of the Oregon House to two-year terms. Commission members select their own officers to serve one-year terms.

Grand Ronde Tribal Council member Cheryle A. Kennedy has been the Tribe’s longtime representative on the commission, serving 12 years. She is currently the commission’s longest serving member.

All proposed state legislation is filtered through the commission so that Tribes can provide input when necessary.

Grand Ronde participation in the 40th anniversary celebration was large and quite visible.

Grand Ronde drummers – Jordan and Bobby Mercier, Travis Stewart, Brian Krehbiel, David Harrelson and Santiago Atanacio – opened the event as the Honor Guard brought in the U.S., Oregon and nine Tribal flags.

In the flag procession were Grand Ronde Tribal Elders Steve Bobb Sr. (U.S. flag), Raymond Petite (Grand Ronde Tribal flag), Alton Butler (POW/MIA flag) and Tribal Council Chairman Reyn Leno, also carrying a Grand Ronde Tribal flag.

Tribal Elder Jolanda Catabay sang the national anthem as Tribal Council Vice Chair Jack Giffen Jr., Secretary Toby McClary and Tribal Council members Denise Harvey and Kennedy looked on. Warm Springs Chief Delvis Heath gave the invocation.

Siletz Tribal Chairwoman Dee Pigsley acted as the master of ceremonies and the event featured speeches from Secretary of State Jeanne Atkins, Oregon Senate President Peter Courtney, Speaker of the House Tina Kotek and Brown, who signed two proclamations.

The first proclamation honored the 40th anniversary of the Legislative Commission on Indian Services



Photos by Michelle Alaimo

Grand Ronde drummers and singers from left, David Harrelson, Travis Stewart, Bobby Mercier, Jordan Mercier, Santiago Atanacio and Brian Krehbiel perform during the Legislative Commission on Indian Services’ 40th anniversary celebration held in the State Capitol rotunda in Salem on Thursday, May 14.



At left, Tribal Chairman Reyn Leno carries the Tribal flag out at the end of the Legislative Commission on Indian Services’ 40th anniversary celebration held in the State Capitol rotunda in Salem on Thursday, May 14.

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can Tribes in Oregon; we work together as partners.”

Courtney also noted that the nine Tribal flags are mounted first at the Capitol’s Walk of Flags, which flies all 50 state flags.

“We celebrate an auspicious occasion,” Kotek said. “Today, myself and the other members of the Legislature continue to respect the sovereignty of our Tribal nations here in Oregon. We are committed to working with the Tribal governments.”

“It is extremely important to have a relationship of respect and inter-governmental communication between Tribal governments and the Oregon Legislature. We have been a leader for 40 years in showing how we can work together on many issues in making sure that Oregon is a state where every person can thrive and succeed. The Legislative Commission on Indian Services has played a pivotal role in that communication and partnership ... I hope for 40 more years of collaboration and friendship.”

Following the formal ceremony, which was closed by the Grand Ronde drum group, Tribal representatives sat on two panels for presentations entitled “What, How and Why My Tribe Celebrates.” Kennedy joined representatives from the Klamath, Coquille and Umatilla Tribes to discuss Grand Ronde Tribal practices.

She gave a brief history of Termination and Restoration, and said that the Grand Ronde Tribe cele-

brates its ancestors, Elders and children.

“When I talk about our people, I am talking about a people who are tenacious, about a people who are strong and about a people who are family values-centered,” Kennedy said. “Elders have a very sacred place in our Tribe. ... When I think holistically about our Tribe, I know that we are working hard on building on our culture, and that really builds on our families.”

Following the panel discussions, Spirit Mountain Casino Head Chef Richard Burr and his staff served a lunch buffet for Capitol employees and ceremony attendees. The meal included cedar plank salmon, meatballs with watermelon and barbecue sauce, pina colada salad, Greek pasta salad, rolls, butter, desserts and bottled water courtesy of the Grand Ronde Tribe.

Following the meal, celebration cupcakes were served.

In the afternoon, Oregon Rep. Brian Clem invited Tribal leaders to an informational briefing about their concerns before the House Committee on Rural Communities, Land Use and Water.

Leno invited Clem and committee members to visit the Grand Ronde Tribe and also discussed public safety issues and the creation of the Tribal Police Department, the Tribal Employment Rights Office memorandum of understanding with the state Department of Transportation and the Tribal history curriculum being used in several school districts at the fourth-grade level.

Helping to ensure the event went off successfully were Public

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