



Tribal Council  
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# Smoke Signals

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UMPQUA ■ MOLALLA ■ ROGUE RIVER ■ KALAPUYA ■ CHASTA

## Spirit Mountain Casino turns 20

### Gaming enterprise transformed Grand Ronde Tribe in myriad ways

By Brent Merrill  
*Smoke Signals staff writer*

On Oct. 16, Spirit Mountain Casino will mark its 20th anniversary of the opening.

Consistently one of Oregon's top tourist attractions, Spirit Mountain Casino has been the driver that put the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde on the Oregon map economically, culturally and politically, as well as helped lead the Tribe to prosperity.

"I think this anniversary is a huge event," says Tribal Council Vice Chairman Jack Giffen Jr. "I really think that the people who drove the casino in the beginning really thought it would last only 10 years. So a 20-year anniversary is huge in my eyes."

Tribal gaming in the United States began Oct. 17, 1988, with passage of the National Indian Gaming Regulatory

Act. Tribal gaming in Grand Ronde started when Tribal Council member Merle Holmes and a handful of Tribal Council members visited the Poarch Band of Creek Indians in Alabama.

The Poarch Band had established a bingo hall on its Reservation and used the profits to build a fish hatchery and paint recycling business, and it had begun building Elder housing. The Poarch Band now operates three casinos in Alabama.

Before the trip to Alabama, Holmes had opposed gaming. But when he saw the economic opportunities brought about by something as simple as a bingo hall, he thought about how gaming could benefit the Grand Ronde Tribe. Holmes was one of the most respected Tribal leaders in the North-

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Country singer Martina McBride will be performing in Spirit Mountain Casino's Events Center on Saturday, Oct. 17, as part of the casino's 20th anniversary.



Photo by Michelle Alaimo

## Tribe offers coffee, conversation and encampment



Photo by Michelle Alaimo

By Dean Rhodes  
*Smoke Signals editor*

MEDFORD – The annual pilgrimage to southern Oregon called "Coffee & Conversation with the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde" couldn't have been more appropriately named.

On Friday, Sept. 25, in the Courtyard Marriott near Medford Airport, Tribal representatives shared cups of coffee and conversation with local representatives from the Medford area.

And on Saturday, Sept. 26, on the shores of the Rogue River and in the shadow of Table Rock, Tribal members held an encampment at TouVelle State

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Tribal Council member Jon A. George beads a necklace for Tribal Elder Kathy Kain during the Table Rock Tribal Encampment at TouVelle State Recreation Site in Central Point on Saturday, Sept. 26. Kain lives in Phoenix, south of Medford.