

Annual Community Input meeting held June 8

By Brent Merrill

Smoke Signals staff writer

The Tribe's annual Community Input meeting was held Wednesday, June 8, in the Tribal gym and provided the membership an opportunity to help shape Tribal programs.

Sixty-one people signed in with General Manager Executive Assistant Barbara Branson and Tribal Council Administrative Assistant Shannon Simi, who supervised the sign-in table. The total included staff members.

Those who attended had the opportunity to talk to Tribal staff one-on-one and tell them how they feel about each program offered to the membership.

Tribal Council Chairman Reyn Leno and Tribal Council members Chris Mercier and Brenda Tuomi attended along with staff from Health and Wellness, Housing, Education, Culture, Social Services, Police and Emergency Management, and Natural Resources. Staff manned 22 information tables in all.

Planning and Grants Development Manager Kim Rogers welcomed everyone and provided a PowerPoint overview of how community meetings work and how the Tribe uses the information gathered from talking to the membership.

"This annual meeting is offered as an opportunity for members to provide comments and suggestions, which will help guide Tribal

programs and grant applications," said Rogers.

Education Department Manager Leslie Riggs said the information gathered is vital to Education staff efforts to improve the program for members who access the educational services offered.

"We actually take the comments and suggestions very seriously," said Riggs. "If it's a good idea it doesn't matter where it comes from. We (Education staff) really value the membership's opinion and the membership's feelings about how our program is run. So whether you have a child in the Early Head Start program or you have a youth in the Youth Ed program or you are accessing higher education or the library, your opinion matters and we really want to hear from the membership about what they think."

Riggs said the information gathered from the membership at input meetings is used for short- and long-range program planning.

Recreation Coordinator Harris Reibach was staffing his first Community Input meeting in his new position with just a month on the job. He said getting everyone's input will help him shape his program to better fit the needs and wants of the membership.

"That's what we're all about is making sure that the gym and the whole Recreation program helps the community and helps people have a healthy outlet to exercise,"

said Reibach. "We just want to get as many people involved as we can."

Nursing Supervisor Christa Hosley sat at the Health and Wellness information table with other staff members. Visitors to Hosley's table were asked to fill out a community feedback survey.

The survey asked members when their first visit to the Health and Wellness Center was and how many times they had been there. The survey asked general information about what type of care had been received and if the current hours of operation and the current medical services offered fit the membership's needs.

Tribal Wildlife Biologist Lindsay Belonga staffed the Natural Resources information table and asked members how they feel about current hunting regulations and seasons, and how membership feels about the public accessing Reservation lands.

Belonga also shared with members that her department is doing a DNA study of local deer populations and using sonar to conduct fish surveys on Agency Creek.

"We're trying to understand the population," said Belonga. "That information is going to be used to determine how many additional hunting and fishing tags we can issue to the membership. What we're trying to get from the survey is what would the membership benefit from in terms of what would those hunting and fishing regula-

tions look like."

Belonga said she wants to know if hunters want to have their additional hunting opportunities before or after the regular hunting season, or both. She said she wants to know how Tribal members feel about public access to the Reservation during hunting seasons. She also wants to know if they are fine with the way things are now or if they want to limit public access at some point.

"That kind of information will help us develop those regulations as we move forward under the Tribal Wildlife Management Plan and continue to issue those hunting tags," said Belonga.

Mercier said anytime that the Tribe has an opportunity to share information with the membership, it's a good idea.

"I think it's good just to have an open house of the Tribe and all its programs because I think a lot of the Tribal members that live locally are familiar with some of the programs, but not everybody is familiar with everything that we have going on," said Mercier. "This is a good way to get the word out. They (Tribal members) can interact with a staff member of a department. I have found that this is so useful and goes a long way in letting members know everything that the Tribe has going on. Sometimes you just have to make these opportunities available."

A dinner was provided and door prizes were raffled off, as well. ■



Recognizing the accomplishments of our graduates! Dinner will be provided. The ceremony will recognize Grand Ronde students who have reached an educational milestone in K-3 Chinuk language class, eighth -grade, high school, GED completion, certificates and college. If you graduated or will be graduating in the 2015- 16 academic year, contact Education via e- mail at education@grandronde.org or call 503- 879-2275 or 800- 422-0232, ext. 2275.