

'We want to thank you for th



From left, Symphony Zimmer, Kalea Liebelt, Taylor Ruggles and Hallie Brewer hold hands as they participate in an InterTribal dance during the Tribe's 33rd Restoration Powwow held in the Tribal gym on Tuesday, Nov. 22.

RESTORATION continued from front page

Kim Contreras, Chelsea Clark and Tammy Fisher, among others, backed the drummers with singing.

Tribal youth Kailiyah Krehbiel led a group of 12 Canoe Family dancers around the gymnasium while others drummed and sang.

Kailiyah Krehbiel and others danced for the first three songs and then Bobby Mercier said the fourth song was important for the Restoration event.

"This song is called 'Traveling With Our Ancestors,'" said Bobby Mercier. "There were a lot of them that traveled to be here. Many of them passed away after just days of being here from the exhaustion. People were made to walk from different directions to come here to Grand Ronde. We're very thankful for the strength of those people that made it here. We're very thankful for their teachings and everything that they left behind to give us the strength to carry on. We're thankful for all those that made it here so we could be here today."

Bobby Mercier said the fifth song was about the 263-mile Trail of Tears forced march from Table Rock near Medford to Grand Ronde that occurred in 1856.

"This song is to honor all of those who made the journey here to the Reservation," said Bobby Mercier as Canoe Family dancers gathered with drummers on stage to join them as backup singers.

Bobby Mercier had Nokoia Mercier, Kaikanim Mercier, Izaiiah Fisher and Jacob Holmes go down in front of the stage for the next-to-last drum song for a "Boy's" dance.

The final drum song to open the Restoration event was a prayer song. "This is a song for our ancestors," he said.

Tribal Royalty performed "The Lord's Prayer" and Tribal Elder and former longtime Tribal Council Chairwoman Kathryn Harrison gave the opening invocation.

"We want to thank you for this day – especially this day," said Harrison during her prayer. "We thank

you for those ancestors and for their strength and wisdom."

Tribal Council Vice Chair Cheryl A. Kennedy welcomed the audience and introduced council members and former council members present.

"This is a wonderful celebration," said Kennedy. "Of all of the events that the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde hosts every year, this is the one that commemorates into all the joy, the happiness, the hard work and the gatherings of our families and friends. It's time to celebrate. It's time to give thanks. It's time to show that we are truly

grateful. What a wonderful time."

Kennedy said she was happy to share the joy she had in her heart with everyone who made the effort to be with the Tribe on such an important day.

"We are here," said Kennedy. "We stand together in unity. As we come together here today in recognition of our Restoration, we know that throughout the years our Tribe has been through many, many hardships and there were many, many battles that we had to go through to be here."

Kennedy said that the treaties the Tribe signed with the U.S. government meant little to the leaders of the dominant culture. She said the treaties were little more than a land grab and that it was Native peoples who paid the price with their very way of life.

"We have five treaties that came with all of the bands and the Tribes of Indians that have come together to form what we now know as the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde," said Kennedy. "That blood flows through your veins. That is the one thing that we all have in common – that blood flows through us today. And it is powerful and it is strong. It is the voice of our ancestors that keeps telling us to move forward, keep on doing good things. To keep on raising your children in the Tribal way, keep on practicing our cultural ways, keep doing that."

Kennedy said the Tribal membership has much to be thankful for and that if the U.S. government could have eliminated Native peo-



Kaleigha Simi, right, dances with other girls, including Sophia Grout, left, in a Junior Girls Exhibition dance during the Tribe's 33rd Restoration Powwow held in the Tribal gym on Tuesday, Nov. 22.