

Linfield College hosts 'Voices from Standing Rock'

By Bethany Bea

Smoke Signals Intern

McMINNVILLE — More than 100 people gathered in Pioneer Hall at Linfield College in McMinnville at 6 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 23, to listen to eight people share their personal experiences from the Standing Rock Sioux camps.

The events at the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation in North Dakota drew people and donations from all over the world, including Grand Ronde. Tribal Council passed a resolution supporting the Standing Rock Sioux and donated \$2,500, and numerous Tribal members ferried supplies there multiple times.

One thing that everyone brought home was a story.

Speakers sat in a half-circle while behind them a projector displayed photos from Standing Rock. There were also two short videos and a discussion on how social media shaped the movement.

Four Grand Ronde Tribal members attended: Tribal Elder Alan Ham and his nephew, Joseph Ham, Dustin Hawks and Logan Kneeland.

The event, which had been scheduled for months, fell on the day after the evacuation deadline for the largest Standing Rock camp, Oceti Sakowin, occurred. Water protectors were protesting the route of the Dakota Access Pipeline, which threatens the water supply on the Sioux Reservation and downriver on the Missouri. They were forcibly removed by North Dakota police.

Andra Kovacs and Duncan Reid, who organized the Linfield event, said they were moved by the events unfolding in North Dakota and felt a call to action.

Kovacs, Reid and a group of Lin-



Photo by Michelle Alaimo

Tribal Elder Alan Ham takes a photo of the crowd at the "Voices from Standing Rock" event held at Linfield College in McMinnville on Thursday, Feb. 23.

field students, after two weeks of planning, piled into two of the college's 12-passenger vans and drove straight through to North Dakota, changing drivers as they went.

"We didn't need two vans for the seating, but we had so many donations that we were taking with us," Kovacs said.

Joseph Ham, Hawks and Kneeland drove to Standing Rock together last fall along with Kneeland's father. They took two vehicles to accommodate the large amount of donations that Grand Ronde Tribal members sent with them.

Kneeland said all three wished to thank the Grand Ronde membership for their generous contributions of blankets, clothes, money and first aid supplies.

He said one of the most amazing things about the Standing Rock camps was how representative they

were that the old ways still have a place in the modern world.

"We can go back to the old way of living, that simple way of living. That was something that was practiced within camp all the time," he said. "Everyone helping out, helping one another. Everyone was on the same level playing field."

The generosity of strangers was something that was echoed among almost all eight speakers. Kovacs held back tears when recounting her own story. The Linfield party ran out of water at the same time some of its members fell ill. When Reid went in search of water, offering apologies, a man filled his jug and offered the words, "Water is life."

Hawks said places like the Standing Rock camps cause intense feelings because the constraints of daily life don't exist there.

"It allows the mind to open up to be thinking of what are the problems of the world, and what are the solutions we can come up with?" he said. "That's the reason why camps like that, why the government wants to destroy them as soon as possible. Because it allows that. That's how revolutions happen."

The departure from regular habits was illustrated when all three men struggled to remember exactly when they were at Standing Rock. "You forget all time when you're in there," Kneeland said.

Alan Ham said he attended the event in part because of his nephew's

journey, but also because he's familiar with that part of the country and had been following the movement. His late wife was from Pine Ridge.

He said the speakers' enthusiasm when discussing how their views had changed impressed him.

"The young people here are so passionate in everything, and that really appealed to me," he said. "I'm a social worker, so I like working with people and I like seeing that passion in people."

Even if these types of passion-fueled uprisings ebb, it's still important to look at these events as a learning tool for future issues, Hawks said.

"Similar things happen when people gather like this," he said. "The same sort of political problems come up. And we need to overcome that if we're actually going to get free." ■

American Museum of Natural History

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The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde and the American Museum of Natural History are now accepting youth applications to participate in our Annual Tamanowas Ceremony and Museum Internship Program.

The Application Process is open to High School Females that meet the following qualifications:

- Enrolled member of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde
- Current Sophomore, Junior, Senior in High School
- G.P.A. of 2.5 or above
- Oregon Resident

Application Deadline is March 24th, 5pm

Application is available online at grandronde.org

Please contact Travis Stewart for further information at: travis.stewart@grandronde.org



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- Birth History
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What is a Lifebook? A Lifebook is a connection to a child's past, a record of the child's personal history and a valuable tool for helping a child understand the difficult transitions in their life.



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