

General Council briefed on Education

By Dean Rhodes
Smoke Signals editor

PORTLAND – Tribal Education Department Manager Leslie Riggs started his presentation on 2017 educational accomplishments before a quorum-less General Council meeting held on Sunday, Feb. 4, at the Monarch Hotel & Conference Center near Clackamas Town Center.

However, shortly after starting, the 30-member quorum benchmark was attained.

Riggs gave a 25-minute presentation that covered programs and accomplishments by his large department that works to help Tribal members with their education from early childhood through adulthood.

- Some highlights included:
- **Early Childhood Education:** In September, the Tribe received a \$500,000 grant to expand the program throughout Polk and Yamhill counties, adding 20 home-based spots for children birth to 3 years of age and eight center-based slots for 2 year olds, increasing the total number of slots to 112. “It is the mission of the ECE to lay the foundation for lifelong success,” Riggs said.
 - **Chinuk Language Program:** Nine staff members currently instruct 12 Early Childhood pre-school students, 19 kindergarten through third-grade students and 15 high school students in learning the Tribe’s language. “We hope to bring Chinuk Wawa back as a living and breathing language to help heal and restore a major factor of our Tribal identity,” Riggs said.
 - **Youth Education:** The department’s 10 full-time staff members provide tutorial services to 181 kindergarten through 12th-grade



Photo by Dean Rhodes
Tribal Education Department Manager Leslie Riggs gave a presentation on his department’s accomplishments and goals during the Sunday, Feb. 4, General Council meeting held at the Monarch Hotel & Convention Center in Clackamas.

students in the Willamina and Sheridan school districts. In addition, every one of 23 Tribal eighth-grade students was promoted to high school in 2017, 12 Tribal seniors graduated from high school and the program experienced its largest participation levels in both the Student Youth Employment and Summer Credit Recovery programs. “Our kids are very lucky,” Riggs said about the variety of programs offered by Youth Education.

- **Higher Education:** Sixty-nine Tribal members graduated in 2017, including 12 associate degrees, 33 bachelor’s degrees, 11 master’s degrees and one doctoral degree. “We offer very generous funding,” Riggs said about the assistance Tribal members receive to attend post-secondary educa-

tional institutions. “These dollars go a long way in assisting our Tribal members in realizing their educational goals and dreams.”

- **Academic Advising:** Staff members help with college admission and applications, filling out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid and other academic needs for Tribal students.
- **Tribal History Curriculum:** After creating a fourth- and eighth-grade Tribal history curriculum, the Tribe’s high school curriculum aimed at sophomores will be completed this year and will be available for distribution to school districts in 2019. “We are also working with public school teachers to ensure that all of the curriculum meet all of the benchmarks and all state standards,” Riggs said.
- **Family Services:** Coordinators are currently working with 64 children in 38 families in nearby school districts. Coordinators advocate for Tribal children and their educational needs.
- **Tribal Library:** The Tribal Library, which Riggs called one of his “favorite places” on the Tribal campus, issued 78 library cards in 2017 and experienced 8,130 patron visits. The Tribal Library has more than 18,000 items, which include books, Tribal newspapers and movies on DVD.

Riggs fielded two questions after his presentation, which discussed the possibility of Education expanding its services for Tribal members living in the Portland and Salem areas.

Riggs said that anyone with

additional comments or questions should contact him at 503-879-2284 or leslie.riggs@grandronde.org.

In other action, Phebi Grude, Carley Alexander and Terry Boerckel won the \$100 door prizes and Kamiah Koch, Marcel Allen, June Olson, Debi Anderson and Lynn Baker won the \$50 door prizes. Baker donated her winnings back to the Elders. Two necklaces donated by Tribal Council Secretary Jon A. George also were raffled off.

General Council attendees joined together to sing “Happy Birthday” to Tribal Council member Michael Langley, who turned 51.

George, Culture Committee member Eric Bernando and Riggs performed the cultural singing and drumming to open the meeting.

During the meeting, Tribal members also were able to pick up a salmon distribution from the Natural Resources Department. After the meeting, the first of three community input meetings was held, seeking suggestions for possible advisory votes to be placed on the September Tribal Council ballot. Tribal General Manager David Fullerton moderated the advisory vote discussion and about 25 Tribal members remained on Super Bowl Sunday to provide input.

The next General Council meeting will be held Sunday, March 4, at the Tribal Community Center in Grand Ronde.

The video of the General Council meeting can be viewed by visiting the Tribal website at www.grandronde.org and clicking on the News tab and then Video. ■

Join us for a discussion with Chief McKnight on February 21, 2018 from 2pm – 6pm, 9655 Grand Ronde Road at the new police department. Lunch will be provided.

This will be an open topic discussion on how the police department can better serve the community of Grand Ronde.

WIC visits Community Center monthly

Pregnant? Breastfeeding? Does your family include a child under the age of 5?

If so, you may qualify for the Women, Infants and Children program. With WIC, people can receive answers to nutritional questions and access fruits and vegetables, whole grains, eggs, milk, cheese, juice, cereal and more.

A WIC representative visits the Tribal Community Center on the third Tuesday of the month, which will be Feb. 20.

Walk-ins are welcome between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m.

For more information or to schedule an appointment, call 503-879-2034. ■