

Tribal Governments Legislative Day set for Thursday, Feb. 22

By Danielle Frost

Smoke Signals staff writer

“Oregon is Indian Country: Who We Are” is the theme of Tribal Governments Legislative Day being held 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 22, at the State Capitol in Salem.

Held every year, the event provides an opportunity for Oregon’s nine federally recognized Tribes to highlight who they are and what makes Tribal governments different from the other interest groups and stakeholders with whom legislators and state agencies mostly interact.

“This year’s theme is an opportunity for each of the nine federally recognized Tribal Nations in Oregon to decide how they would like to emphasize or describe who their people are, their sovereignty and their culture,” Legislative Commission on Indian Services Executive Director Karen Quigley said.

The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde will supply a light breakfast for the event. Public Affairs Administrative Assistant Chelsea Clark, Tribal Council members and Tribal lobbyist Justin Martin usually attend to meet with veteran and newly elected legislators.

Tribal Council Chairwoman Cheryle A. Kennedy, the longest-serving member of the Legislative Commission on Indian Services, is serving as event host along with fellow commission members and staff.

If you go

Tribal Governments Day
Where: State Capitol, 900 Court St. N.E., Salem
When: 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 22
More info: 503-986-1067

Tribal Governments Day has been held for more than 12 years.

“This is a day for lawmakers, legislative staff, agency directors and agency staff, as well as members of the public, to perhaps learn a little something they didn’t know before about the Tribes of Oregon,” Quigley said. “If she can, the governor will stop by and say hello.”

In addition, Tribal Governments Day provides an opportunity to visit Tribal information tables and ask Tribal leaders and staff members questions from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

“Many Tribes have expressed that visiting with each other is also another fun part of the day,” Quigley said. “All nine Tribes generally participate.”

Tribal Council Vice Chair Chris Mercier said that Oregonians still know far less about Tribes than they could.

“So we need to take these opportunities to let them know who we are, that we still maintain our own traditions, that we still have our own governments, and that overall we are a part of mainstream society, but also have our own



Smoke Signals file photo

Tribal youth Kaleigha Simi talks with Oregon Gov. Kate Brown during Tribal Governments Day held at the State Capitol building in Salem last February. This year’s Tribal Governments Day is scheduled for Thursday, Feb. 22.

communities and governments,” Mercier said.

Without the opportunity to learn more, there is a temptation to categorize all Tribes generally, Mercier said.

“If people really take the time to know, they’ll see that all of us have different histories and are unique in our own way,” he said. “We have a role to play in this education and it is through opportunities like Tribal Governments Day.”

Quigley said that during past

events, Tribes have displayed and shared thoughts about their baskets, cradleboards, Native plants, first foods, youth and Elders programs, partnerships with their neighbors and other governments, fisheries, health programs and governmental organization.

In addition to the light breakfast provided by the Tribe, the Native American Rehabilitation Association will be serving mini fry bread at noon. Other Tribes will provide donations of coffee and water. ■

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