



2013 – Madison Ross, 11, made her first appearance to the community during her Coming of Age ceremony held at the Tribal plankhouse on Sunday, Sept. 29. Leading up the event, she spent four days with her mother, Sarah Ross, and grandmother, Tribal Elder Kelly Nelson, praying, learning family and Tribal histories, making giveaway items, and on a search for the spirit that will guide her through life. It was the first public Coming of Age ceremony for the Grand Ronde Tribe in more than 100 years.



2013 File photo

2008 – The Tribe held a Chankal Celebration about pieces of rock that were found on a property it had purchased on Skyline Road in Salem. The rocks had been recognized as fertility artifacts from the Kalapuya people and by Tribes from across the Northwest through thousands of years of their history following the Missoula Floods more than 14,000 years ago. The Tribe purchased the property in 2007 and after an intensive cleanup job, it was opened for a celebration. From the peak, a group of more than 50 people could see some of the area’s important cultural sites, including Marys Peak west of Corvallis and Spirit Mountain above Grand Ronde.

2003 – A sunrise ceremony was held at Portland State University’s new Native American Student and Community Center. The student center, built with the help of a \$250,000 grant from Spirit Mountain Community Fund, is located on the PSU campus on the corner of Southwest Broadway and Jackson streets. At the time, it was the only facility of its kind in the greater metro region, and provided a place for community activities, ceremonial and social functions, community outreach programs, storytelling and art activities.

1998 – The Tribe filed a lawsuit against the Grand Ronde Water Association in a final effort to end a yearlong disagreement over the cost of a water hook-up for the Tribe’s Grand Meadows Housing Project. The two sides were locked in a dispute over initial water hook-up fees. The Tribe attempted to solve the dispute informally and was unsuccessful. Tribal attorneys then proposed arbitration, which was rejected by the Water Association. “The Tribe acknowledges that it is a large user of water in this community,” said Tribal Attorney Rob Greene. “We use more water and we pay for the water we use.”

1993 – The development of Spirit Mountain Resort was progressing according to plan after a groundbreaking event that included traditional ceremonies as well as a statements from Tribal Council Chair Mark Mercier, Vice Chair Kathryn Harrison and Spirit Mountain Development Corp. General Manager Bruce Thomas. A new sign along Highway 18 announced the construction, which was expected to be finished in late 1994. Paul Rink Architecture was selected to design the facility, and the conceptual drawings had been completed. A committee comprised of Harrison, Merle Holmes and Tammy Cook were working with historians in an effort to keep the Tribe’s cultural heritage in the final design.

1988 – Ray McKnight, Marvin Kimsey and Merle Holmes won the Tribal Council election, garnering 98, 77 and 74 votes, respectively. McKnight was the only incumbent re-elected as Gene LaBonte and Merle Leno did not have enough votes. Chairman Mark Mercier thanked both for their service, noting that the Reservation Bill process was “no cakewalk.”

Yesteryears is a look back at Tribal history in five-year increments through the pages of Smoke Signals.

Interpretive sign



Photos by Timothy J. Gonzalez

Tribal Council Secretary Jon A. George, left, and Curtis Robinhold, executive director of the Port of Portland, look over the newly dedicated interpretive sign commemorating the Tribal cultural significance of the Sandy River Delta region in Troutdale on Thursday, Sept 13.



Tribal members and staff of the Port of Portland gathered to dedicate an interpretive sign commemorating the Tribal cultural significance of the Sandy River Delta region in Troutdale on Thursday, Sept 13.

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