

# Annual event held since 2012

**COFFEE continued  
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there, all are important to us. ... I took my grandma to Table Rocks in 1997 and she told me stories, and always talked about the importance of the plants. I always remembered that. Many are in danger now and what can we do to revive them? These are the things we want to talk about."

Upper and Lower Table Rock have significant cultural and historical importance to the Grand Ronde Tribe because Rogue River ancestors lived in the area since time immemorial and were held there temporarily before they were force-marched to the current Reservation during the February and March 1856 Trail of Tears.

Since the signing of the 2011 agreement, the Tribe has held an annual event in Medford to maintain relationships with federal, state, county and local area officials, and then participate in cultural activities during the afternoon near Table Rocks.

This year's event at the Courtyard Marriott attracted 15 people, including representatives from the Bureau of Land Management, The Nature Conservancy, Lomakatsi Restoration Project, Friends of Cascade-Siskiyou Monument, Oregon Parks and Recreation Department and Jackson County Board of Commissioners.

The Grand Ronde contingent included Kennedy, Tribal Council Secretary Jon A. George, Tribal Elder Greg Archuleta, Tribal Council



Photos by Timothy J. Gonzalez

**Tayatt Holmes, 9, collects acorns for acorn soup at TouVelle State Recreation Site in Central Point on Friday Sept. 21. The acorn gatherings were part of cultural activities offered by the Tribe during the annual Coffee & Conversation event.**

Chief of Staff Stacia Hernandez, Tribal Attorney Rob Greene, Ceded Lands Program Manager Michael Karnosh, Public Affairs Administrative Assistant Chelsea Clark, Historic Preservation Manager Briece Edwards and Archeologist Cheryl Pouley.

George and Archuleta opened the meeting with a drum song, backed by Karnosh and Clark.

Archuleta gave an overview of the Rogue River peoples, which included history, treaties and the importance of Native plants.

"Many different Tribal groups lived in this region and many different Tribal members have connections to this place," he said. "We always say our people have been here since time immemorial and we have lots of stories connected to Table Rocks. For our people the land was very important; the acorns, the white oaks, all have connections."

Archuleta also discussed how some of the Tribes were enemies at the time they were removed from their Native lands to the Grand Ronde Reservation, and their subsequent decisions to make peace with each other. He also touched on the Tribe's Termination in 1954 and Restoration in 1983, along with "The Rise of the Collectors" exhibit currently on display at the Tribal museum, Chachalu.

"We are still a very young Tribe, but definitely interested in partnerships," Archuleta said.

Kennedy said that she has been privileged to help lead the Tribe as a council member during the Restoration era and today.

"I have four treaty signers in my family, so I don't think it is out of line that I have been able to lead the people (serving on council) for two decades now," she said.

After everyone in the room introduced themselves, Belinda Brown of the Lomakatsi Restoration Project asked about traditional Native American burning to help manage forests.

"How much is fire coming back into your community?" she said. "We are trying to get fire on the ground as both prevention and medicine."

Archuleta said that today's scientific community is starting to realize the positive effects of traditional burning.

"Those fires and how the Tribes used them is important," he said.

Darren Borgias of The Nature Conservancy said he wanted to express his gratitude to the Tribe's Cultural Resources Manager David Harrelson for helping the nonprofit with a recently published scientific paper about the use of fire in forest management.

It found that the burning of forestlands before Euro-American settlement of southern Oregon was better than modern-day forest management practices.

After introductions and questions were complete, Hernandez and Clark gifted attendees with necklaces and sage bundles.

George explained the meaning behind giveaways.

"In our culture, when you visit someone's home you bring a gift," he said. "That is part of our tradition."

Coffee & Conversation attendees also were invited to participate in cultural activities afterward.

This year, activities were expanded throughout the weekend and included free camping and meals at nearby TouVelle State Recreation Site along the Rogue River in an effort to increase interest for Tribal members to make the 225-mile journey southward.

Early Friday afternoon, Tribal Council member Lisa Leno and other Tribal members gathered acorns for making soup. Other activities included beading, maple bark skirt making, basket weaving and reading books on Tribal history and culture.

"I love the connection," Leno said. "Coming back here was important and gives me a chance to reflect. The opportunity to go up hiking (Table Rock) and the history of and how important it is to our people is beautiful. I'm also glad our youth get to be here."

Cultural Education Specialist Flicka Lucero cooked for the encampment. It was her first time in the Table Rocks area.

"I am pretty excited about this," she said. "It is just beautiful here and it is also a chance to connect to our ancestral homelands and history, and share our stories when we return home."

Saturday's cultural schedule included a hike with Tribal youth to the top of Upper Table Rock and a continuation of Friday camp activities. Tribal staff involved in the efforts included Clark, Lucero, Cultural Education Coordinator Jordan Mercier, Cultural Education Specialist Brian Krehbiel, Youth Prevention Supervisor Nicole Hewitt and Youth Prevention Coordinator Cristina Lara. ■



**A tree with a multitude of holes, believed to be caused by woodpeckers, are filled with acorns at TouVelle State Recreation Site in Central Point on Friday Sept. 21. Tribal members gathered acorns during cultural activities at the site.**