

# Tribe honors numerous employees

By Dean Rhodes

*Smoke Signals editor*

During a two-hour ceremony held Wednesday, Nov. 7, in the Tribal gym, Tribal Council members and General Manager David Fullerton thanked all employees who contributed to building the Willamette Falls fishing platform that was completed on Oct. 23.

Employees recognized included those who actually did the physically taxing and dangerous work, as well as those who supported them and those who remained behind in Grand Ronde to ensure government processes and services to Tribal members continued uninterrupted.

Tribal Council Secretary Jon A. George opened the ceremony with a blessing in which he called Oct. 23 a “significant, historical day” for the Tribe and expressed gratitude that after 135 years Tribal members can return to their ancestral ways of fishing at the falls.

After employees ate lunch that included a sandwich bar, potato and macaroni salads, cookies and soft drinks, Fullerton thanked the packed gymnasium for a “tremendous day and tremendous turnout.”

“We really wanted to bring all of our staff together to celebrate the significant accomplishment of erecting our fishing platform at Willamette Falls,” Fullerton said.

Canoe Family singers that included Cultural Advisor Bobby Mercier, Cultural Resources staff member Nicholas Atanacio, Cultural Resources Manager David Harrelson, Interpretative Coordinator Travis Stewart, Tribal Council Secretary Jon A. George, Recreation Coordinator Harris Reibach, Cultural Education Specialist Brian Krehbiel, Cultural Education Coordinator Jordan Mercier and



Photos by Timothy J. Gonzalez

**Tribal Council Chairwoman Cheryle A. Kennedy congratulates those who worked to erect the Tribal Ceremonial Fishing Platform at Willamette Falls including GIS Coordinator Alex Drake, left, and Utility Maintenance Supervisor Joe Loomis in the Tribal gym on Wednesday, Nov. 7.**

6-12 Tutor Vincent Chargualaf appropriately sang and drummed “The Salmon Song.”

Harrelson gave a history on the Tribe’s connection to Willamette Falls, dating back to pre-contact times when the Clow-we-walla and Clackamas controlled harvests at the important Native trade center. He also displayed a recently discovered photograph of Willamette Falls taken between 1883 and 1887 that shows a fishing platform still being used by Native Americans for subsistence fishing.

“What is so significant about this photo is that it is the earliest known photographic record of the falls with a fishing platform in it,”

Harrelson said. “That’s 30 years after people were removed to the Reservation in the 1850s. That is a whole generation later and yet there are still Indian people out at the falls.

“The people of Grand Ronde are the people of Willamette Falls, and the people of Willamette Falls are the people Grand Ronde.”

Fullerton said understanding the history of Willamette Falls helps Tribal employees understand why the Tribe put such an effort into building the fishing platform, as well as understand Tribal member connections to the falls area.

A video created by Deputy Press Secretary Sara Thompson showed

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the progress of building the platform and included drone footage taken by GIS Coordinator Alex Drake and underwater GoPro footage of a sturgeon being caught in a dipnet.

“That three-minute video represents three weeks of work,” Fullerton said.

Tribal Council Chairwoman Cheryle A. Kennedy told employees how happy she was to know



**Former Tribal Council Chairwoman Kathryn Harrison, center, listens to one of the presentations during the celebration for the completion of the Tribal Ceremonial Fishing Platform at Willamette Falls in the Tribal gym on Wednesday, Nov. 7.**