

Honoring partnerships

Spring Celebration fetes relationship between state and its nine Tribes

By Danielle Frost

Smoke Signals staff writer

SALEM — Since time immemorial, Tribes have lived on and used the lands and waterways of Oregon, and been stewards of the state's natural resources.

To honor and protect that long heritage, the state established the Legislative Commission on Indian Services and then an executive order created a government-to-government relationship between the state and its nine federally recognized Tribes.

That relationship was celebrated with the LCIS Spring Celebration held on Thursday, May 16, at the state Capitol Rotunda. This year's theme was "Moving Forward Together: Being Good Stewards of Our People, Lands and Culture."

Representatives from all nine federally recognized Tribes attended. Tribal information tables were on display at the upstairs Senate Gallery.

Grand Ronde's table was staffed by Tribal Council Chief of Staff Stacia Hernandez, Deputy Press Secretary Sara Thompson and Public Affairs Administrative Assistant Chelsea Baranski. It included ceded lands maps, pens, note pads, lanyards, chocolates, highlighters, key chains and information on Spirit Mountain Community Fund.

The Spring Celebration began with a song from Grand Ronde Tribal drummers, which included Interpretive Coordinator Travis Stewart, Historic Preservation Technician Nicolas Atanacio, Cultural Resources Department Manager David Harrelson, Tribal member Brian Krehbiel, Cultural Advisor Bobby Mercier, Cultural Education Coordinator Jordan Mercier and K5 Tutor/Advisor Santi Atanacio.

Flags representing the nine Tribes were brought in by Tribal government leaders and led by the Siletz Color Guard. Also included



Photos by Timothy J. Gonzalez

From left, Tribal Council member Michael Langley and Tribal Council Chairwoman Cheryle A. Kennedy look on as Gov. Kate Brown signs a proclamation declaring May 18-25 as American Indian Week during the Legislative Commission on Indian Services' Spring Celebration held at the Capitol in Salem on Thursday, May 16. The theme for this year's event was "Moving Forward Together: Being Good Stewards of Our People, Land and Culture."



were the American flag, Oregon flag and POW/MIA flag.

Tribal Council member Denise Harvey carried in the Grand Ronde flag. Other Tribal Council members in attendance were Chairwoman Cheryle A. Kennedy, Vice Chair Chris Mercier, Jack Giffen Jr., Lisa Leno and Michael Langley. Also attending were Historic Preservation Manager Briece Edwards and Finance Officer Chris Leno.

Klamath Tribal Chair Don Gentry gave the invocation.

LCIS Interim Director Danny Santos welcomed attendees to the Spring Celebration.

"We have many Tribes here today, some who have traveled a great distance," he said. "We also welcome our non-Native friends."

Several legislative members of the Commission on Indian Services addressed the crowd.

Sen. Bill Hansell said he built valuable relationships with the Umatilla Tribe near Pendleton while serving for 30 years as a Umatilla County commissioner, and he continues that positive relationship today.

"I continue to help develop that government-to-government relationship and friendship with all of the nine Oregon Tribes through LCIS," he said. "I have learned so much from them about what is important. I appreciate your sovereignty, what you stand for and with

all of your success today."

Senate President Peter Courtney said he loves walking by the Tribal flags every morning on his way to work.

"It's the first thing you see when you walk out," he said.

Courtney also mentioned House Bill 2625, spearheaded by State Rep. Tawna Sanchez (Shoshone-Bannock, Ute and Carrizo), which directs Oregon State Police to study how to increase and improve criminal justice resources regarding missing and murdered Native American women in Oregon and report the findings to a legislative committee no later than Sept. 15, 2020. Gov. Kate Brown signed the bill into law later that afternoon.

"We're not just saying we honor them, we are going to try to make the lives of those who were here first better," Courtney said.

House Speaker Tina Kotek said that Oregon legislators have a long history of working with the nine Tribes.

"We all believe in a healthy and safe Oregon, and have worked on issues regarding the environment, education and public safety," she said. "It is a commitment we have at our Capitol."

After the legislative speakers finished, children from the Grand Ronde Chinuk Wawa Immersion Program performed a Canoe Song.

Grand Ronde Tribal Chairwoman and LCIS Chair Cheryle A. Kennedy welcomed attendees to the Tribe's homelands.

"I want to thank the drummers for welcoming us, our children for dancing and the Siletz Color Guard," she said. "I also want to thank our Tribal leaders. Our voice-

**LCIS continued
on page 11**



Tribal Council Chairwoman Cheryle A. Kennedy, who is also chairwoman of the Legislative Commission on Indian Services, addresses those attending the Spring Celebration held at the Capitol in Salem on Thursday, May 16. The theme for this year's event was "Moving Forward Together: Being Good Stewards of Our People, Land and Culture." Gov. Kate Brown also signed a proclamation declaring May 18-25 as American Indian Week.



Mila Strutton, 3, joins other members of the Chinuk Immersion Program in performing a Paddle Dance during the Legislative Commission on Indian Services Spring Celebration held at the Capitol.