

# Grand Ronde well-represented

By Danielle Frost

*Smoke Signals staff writer*

PORTLAND – The Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians' Winter Convention continues to be a well-attended event and the Grand Ronde Tribe was prominently represented in several different areas.

The annual event, held Sunday, Jan. 26, through Thursday, Jan. 30, at the DoubleTree Hilton is an opportunity for meetings, discussion, presentations and committee work that affects policy, legislation and the future of Indian Country in the Pacific Northwest.

ATNI represents 57 Tribal governments from Oregon, Washington, Idaho, northern California, southeast Alaska and western Montana. More than 24 Tribal governments were in attendance on Monday, Jan. 27.

Grand Ronde Tribal Council Chairwoman Cheryle A. Kennedy led the invocation, asking for a blessing upon ATNI staff, Tribal leaders and the city of Portland.

Drumming and singing were led by Tribal Cultural Advisor Bobby Mercier, Tribal Council Secretary Jon A. George, Cultural Resources Manager David Harrelson and Cultural Policy Analyst Greg Archuleta.

Flags were brought in by the Northwest Indian Veterans Association, which included Grand Ronde Veterans Honor Guard members Al Miller, current Tribal Council member Steve Bobb Sr. and Veterans Special Event Board Chairman Rich VanAtta.

Most Tribal Council members attended the ATNI convention, including Kennedy, Jon A. George, Kathleen George, Jack Giffen Jr., Lisa Leno, Bobb, Denise Harvey and Michael Langley.

Also attending were Tribal Attorney Rob Greene, General Manager David Fullerton, Housing Department Manager Shonn Leno and Tribal Council Chief of Staff Stacia Hernandez.

Kennedy welcomed convention attendees to the Grand Ronde Tribe's ceded homelands, and thanked the color guard and drummers.

"Everyone has come together to enjoy each other's company and share information," Kennedy said. "It's good to be here. ... What you see today in Portland was not here 150 years ago. It was a wetland. We have all the dams on the Columbia River to keep the flooding at bay. Not far from here on the Tualatin River, the restoration of wapato is going on. It makes me feel good."

Oregon Gov. Kate Brown thanked ATNI for continuing to select Portland for its winter convention site.

"It is truly an honor to welcome you to Oregon," Brown said. "When two Tribal chairs come up to you and ask you to speak at a meeting, you do it. It's a unique and challenging time to govern, and it's important that we all work together."

Brown highlighted her years serving on the Legislative Commission for Indian Services, established 45 years ago by the state of Oregon as a means of creating a



Photos by Timothy J. Gonzalez

**Former Hatfield Fellow and Bureau of Indian Affairs Regional Director and Grand Ronde Tribal member Bryan Mercier speaks during the Hatfield Fellowship panel on the third day of the annual Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians Winter Convention on Wednesday, Jan. 29. Joining him on the panel of past Hatfield Fellows, from left, were Dirlle Calica (Warm Spring), Shana Radford (Nez Perce) and Mary Bodine (Warm Springs). The fellowship is sponsored by Spirit Mountain Community Fund and named after the late U.S. Sen. Mark Hatfield.**



**Hatfield Fellow Traven Joseph (Koyokan Athabaskan/Gros-Ventre) talks about his experiences during the Hatfield Fellowship panel on the third day of the annual Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians Winter Convention on Wednesday, Jan. 29. Joining him on the panel of past Hatfield Fellows, from left, were Bureau of Indian Affairs Regional Director Bryan Mercier (Grand Ronde), Shana Radford (Nez Perce), Mary Bodine (Warm Springs), Bodie Shaw (Warm Springs) and Robert Ahern (Warm Springs).**



government-to-government relationship between the state and its nine federally recognized Tribes.

"We've been able to make progress on a number of issues and have ongoing consultations between Tribes and the state of Oregon," Brown said. "The two things I am most proud of doing while serving on the commission are eliminating the 'S' word from geographic names and working to allow Tribal Elders to teach Native languages in schools. We must not lose any of our Native languages."

Brown also touched on the importance of participating in the upcoming 2020 Census, as well as passage of House Bill 2625, which she signed into law last spring. It 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.

"It's a part of our ongoing efforts in Oregon to increase resources," she said. "We know we have jurisdictional issues, lack of proper data collection and lack of trauma-informed care."

ATNI Executive President Leonard Forsman (Suquamish) told attendees that the increasing amount of political division in the country also can serve as an opportunity for Tribes to work together to accomplish common objectives, such as natural resource protection and long-term economic diversity.

"Many Tribal leaders know how important that is," he said. "Sometimes it feels like we are all alone in that. But we have an obligation to protect future generations. There are a lot of people who want a clean environment, but they also want jobs. We need to find ways to have a robust economy, but not be greedy and think short-term."

A report on missing and murdered indigenous women, and federal efforts to address the issue was given by Mark Cruz (Klamath), who serves as deputy assistant secretary in the Bureau of Indian Affairs for policy and economic development. He was appointed by Assistant

Secretary for Indian Affairs Tara Sweeney in September 2018.

"We are often dealing with vexing issues of policy and law," Cruz said. "Increasingly, public safety is an evolving issue and we need to ensure the well-being of everyone

