

Tribal Council members attend virtual summits

By Dean Rhodes
Smoke Signals editor

During the week before Thanksgiving, Tribal Council members attended virtual summits at the White House in Washington, D.C., and in Portland.

On Monday and Tuesday, Nov. 15-16, the White House Tribal Nations Summit returned. Started by the Obama administration, the Tribal Nations Summit was not held during the four years of the Trump administration.

The summit is designed to bring federal government officials and leaders of federally recognized Tribes together to discuss ways the federal government can invest in and continue to strengthen the nation-to-nation relationship and ensure that progress in Indian Country continues.

One of the highlights of the summit was an announcement by the Interior, Education and Health and Human Services departments to work together to preserve, protect and promote the rights and freedoms of Native Americans to use, practice and develop Native languages.

“The cornerstone of any culture or community is its language,” said Interior Secretary Deb Haaland, the first Native American ever confirmed to a Cabinet post. “Languages are where oral histories are passed down, knowledge is shared and bonds are formed. As part of our commitment to strengthening and supporting Indigenous communities, the Interior Department is resolute in its efforts to ensuring Native languages are preserved and protected.”

For more than 150 years, Native American languages were suppressed and eliminated in federal boarding and other types of schools that forced Indigenous children to stop speaking the language of their ancestors.

Other federal agencies that will work to protect Native languages include the departments of Agriculture and Transportation, Institute of Museum and Library Services, the Library of Congress, the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the

Humanities. Another memorandum of understanding between 17 federal agencies announced at the White House Tribal Summit committed them to protecting Tribal treaty rights in agency policy making and regulatory processes. Tribal Council Chairwoman Cheryle A. Kennedy and Tribal Council members Michael Cherry and Denise Harvey were among the Tribal Council members who attended.

During the summit, Haaland also announced federal initiatives to protect Indigenous sacred sites and the formation of the first Tribal Advisory Committee within the Interior Department to improve nation-to-nation consultation.

On Thursday and Friday, Nov. 18-19, Tribal Council members also attended the Tribal Nations Summit with the city of Portland.

Portland held its first Tribal Nations Summit in 2018, which was followed by the second in 2019. The 2020 summit was canceled because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Kennedy, Cherry and Harvey attended the Portland summit along with Tribal Council Vice Chair Chris Mercier and Tribal Council member Lisa Leno.

The third summit was titled “Coming Together As One.” “Our summit is an important step toward developing partnerships, building systemic relationships and making good on the city’s long overdue promise to deepen its relationships with Tribal governmental partners,” the city’s agenda stated.

On Thursday, Nov. 18, Tribal delegates had the opportunity to get to know Portland and Metro council members, hear their policy priorities and ask questions.

On Friday, Nov. 19, Tribal delegates and Portland and Metro leaders focused discussions on topics relevant to Tribes, such as opportunities for Tribal and Indian-owned businesses to contract with the city of Portland, decriminalization of plant medicines for ceremonial and religious purposes, and partnering to address homelessness in the city. ■

Making a move



Photos by Timothy J. Gonzalez

Senior Help Desk Technician Mark Donahoo talks with Application Administrator Dina Sayers as the Information Services offices move into a new 20,000-square-foot building on Thursday, Nov. 18. The new building off of Grand Ronde Road also will house Procurement and the Mail Services departments. Tribal Council approved construction of the new building in August 2019 with a budget of \$2.4 million.



Help Desk Technician Nathan Hoff sorts through printer toner boxes as Information Services moves into its new building.

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Health & Wellness offering Moderna booster shots

The Grand Ronde Health & Wellness Center is now offering COVID-19 booster doses of the Moderna vaccine to eligible individuals, Health Services Executive Director Kelly Rowe announced on Tuesday, Oct. 26.

To be eligible, people must be 65 or older, 18 to 64 years old with underlying medical conditions, 18 or older in a long-term care situation or 18 to 64 and older at increased risk of exposure or transmission because of their occupational setting.

The center will provide boosters to Tribal members and their spouses, other Native Americans and their spouses and families, Tribal employees and their families, and established patients.

The Moderna booster dose can be administered to eligible individuals six months or more after their second vaccine dose. To make an appointment, call 503-879-2032 to schedule a booster dose.

People also can use the COVID vaccine finder to find another vaccination site at www.vaccines.gov/search/. ■