

Harrison received almost unanimous support

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is one of those people who inspired me to take a leadership position in our Tribe. ... When you have a school named after you, you've done something right with your life and career. ... As a Tribal Council member, she considered everyone an equal. I don't know if I'll ever have a school named after me, but I consider it a great honor to speak about someone as distinguished as Kathryn."

In addition to Mercier, other Tribal Council members in attendance included Denise Harvey, Lisa Leno, Michael Cherry, Kathleen George and Jon A. George, who also served as master of ceremonies.

"Today is all about Kathryn and the children who will learn under her school," Jon A. George said. "We're here today because we all know and love this lady."

The ceremony opened with a drum song performed by Cultural Advisor Bobby Mercier, Jon A. George, Cultural Education Specialist Chris Rempel, Cultural Policy Analyst Greg Archuleta, Lisa Leno, Kathleen George, Tribal Council Chief of Staff Stacia Hernandez and Harvey.

Afterward, Archuleta gave audience members a brief overview of the importance of the Corvallis area to the Tribe.

"Our people have lived in this area since time immemorial," he said. "Our lifeways included hunting, fishing and baskets made of natural materials from the area."

The renaming process

In the summer of 2020, during a time of national racial reckoning, the Corvallis School Board voted to remove the names of former presidents Herbert Hoover, Thom-



Photos by Timothy J. Gonzalez

Kathryn Jones Harrison, the Grand Ronde Tribe's eldest Elder at 98, talks with students who attend the elementary school that was renamed in her honor in Corvallis on Thursday, May 5.

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as Jefferson and Woodrow Wilson from elementary schools because the men engaged in racist practices. The schools then temporarily adopted the names of their mascots for the 2020-21 academic year.

In December 2020, the Corvallis School District formed a Renaming Task Force to find new names for Husky, Jaguar and Wildcat elementary schools, and potentially some of the other 14 district-owned buildings.

Harrison's name was among the top 20 suggestions that the task force considered. The top names also included Chepenefa, which was an indigenous Kalapuyan group that lived in present-day Corvallis; Bessie Coleman, the first known African American and Native American woman to hold a

pilot's license; and Tiacan, a Santiam Kalapuya principal chief.

The task force filtered suggestions through six criteria that emphasized names that evoke inspiration, reflect commitments to social justice, represent women, honor local Indigenous history, show the community's connection to place and reject white dominance.

After the top 20 suggestions were released to the public, the task force received feedback from 150 community members and 187 students returned surveys sent out by Noss.

"There were about four people who received almost unanimous support, and Kathryn was one of them," Noss said previously to *Smoke Signals*.

Public comments were most in fa-

vor of Harrison, Letitia Carson and Chepenefa while students leaned toward Harrison, Harriet Tubman and John Lewis.

Carson was the only Black woman in Oregon to secure a land claim as a result of the 1862 Homestead Act. Tubman was known for the Underground Railroad abolitionist movement during the Civil War and Lewis was a Georgia politician and one of the original Freedom Riders during the civil rights movement of the early 1960s.

Noss said that in addition to Harrison, he recommended Coleman and Carson as new elementary school names, which were adopted by the School Board in September 2021. Harrison's name was applied to Jaguar Elementary School.

Harrison was born Kathryn May Jones in 1924 in Corvallis to Harry William Jones and Ella Flemming. Her father was Molalla and her mother Eyak. She attended school in Corvallis before enrolling in Chemawa Indian School in Salem.

She was a key participant in the Grand Ronde Tribe's early 1980s Restoration efforts and was one of five Tribal members who testified before the U.S. House of Representatives on Oct. 18, 1983, in support of restoring the Tribe to federal recognition. The Tribe's federal recognition had been Terminated 29 years earlier in 1954.

After the Tribe was restored on Nov. 22, 1983, she continued her service to her people on Tribal Council from 1984 to 2001. During her time on Tribal Council, she served as secretary, vice chair and six years as Tribal chairwoman. She never lost a Tribal Council election and was the first woman to serve as Tribal chair.

During her time on Tribal Council, she helped guide the Tribe into gaming through the signing of a compact with Oregon Gov. Barbara Roberts in July 1993. She also suggested the Tribe start endowment funds to benefit education, health care, economic development, and social and cultural programs. Those funds continue to be an important economic resource to this day for the Tribe.

The ceremony also included the reading of a letter from former Oregon Rep. Les AuCoin, who was one of two Oregon congressmen who submitted the Grand Ronde Restoration bill to Congress in the early 1980s.

After the renaming ceremony concluded, Grand Ronde drummers and singers performed an honor song for Harrison. Then, a salmon lunch prepared by Cultural Education Coordinator Jordan Mercier was served to attendees and students. ■

Kathryn Jones Harrison, center, poses for a photo with family members, from front left, Sara Jones and Umatilla Tribal Chairwoman Kat Brigham, and rear from left, Mika Asher, Ralph Jones and Dorothy Jones in Corvallis on Thursday, May 5. Brigham was named after Harrison.

