

Getting saucy



Photo by Timothy J. Gonzalez

From left, Tribal Elder Marion Mercier, Ben Moore, 13, Landon Langley, 15, Jenevieve Davis, 15, Youth Prevention Program Manager Amber Mercier and Rhet Kimsey, 6, prepare apples during the applesauce canning event held at the Elders Activity Center on Thursday, Nov. 10. Tribal Elders and youth partnered to prepare 50 pounds of Golden Delicious apples for 60 applesauce jars that will be distributed at the Nov. 22 Restoration event.

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Tribal Elder Deitz Peters speaks at West Point

By Danielle Harrison
Smoke Signals assistant editor/staff writer

Grand Ronde Tribal Elder Deitz Peters has long been an advocate of Native culture and how it relates to military service.

Now, he has had the opportunity to travel to the U.S. Military Academy in West Point, N.Y., to talk to students about the experience of growing up in a Native military family and also to share more about Grand Ronde Tribal culture. Peters left on Sunday, Nov. 13.

West Point was established in 1802 and is the oldest of the five American military service academies. Its purpose is to educate future officers for commission into the Army.

Peters was asked to speak by his cousin and fellow Grand Ronde Tribal member Patrick Sorensen, who is an Army network operations chief with West Point connections.

“I thought it was pretty cool that he asked me to do this,” Peters said. “At that point, I told him it would be fun and we continued talking about it, but with no particular timeline.”

Peters and Sorensen connect-



Deitz Peters

ed earlier in the year before Veterans Powwow in July when Peters made 12 necklaces and five beaded feathers for a future

West Point graduation ceremony. While they were beading, he played the flute as he always does while working with feathers.

“(Sorensen) recorded it and said it was beautiful,” Peters recalled. “He included it with a video that was to be played at the graduation ceremony.”

The two stayed in contact and then in October Sorensen asked if he was still interested in speaking at the college.

Peters didn’t hesitate in answering “yes,” and was contacted soon after by a West Point representative, who comped him both airfare and hotel.

“I’ll be talking to a large group of people and plan to bring my flutes and regalia,” he said. “This will be fun.” ■

‘Today is a great day for the Tribe’

VOTERS continued from front page

proceedings because of incomplete or faulty enrollment records possessed by the Tribe.

Tribal Council Chairwoman Cheryle A. Kennedy called it a “moment in time.”

“Today is a great day for the Tribe,” Kennedy said. “The Tribal membership’s passage of the constitutional amendment to ban disenrollment except in the cases of fraud and dual enrollment signifies many different things for our community and our Tribe. It is lifting a dark cloud that has followed us for some time. It represents our healing as a people, a desire to move forward and the security of our enrolled members.”

Tribal Council member Kathleen George said the vote repudiates the spirit of disenrollment and the Tribe living under someone else’s rules for who is considered family.

“Thank you, Grand Ronde people, for today,” George said. “Grand Ronde people came together in support and love. ... This is a day of strength, beauty and thankfulness.”

The number of registered voters was the smallest for any constitutional election held by the Tribe since 1999. In all of the other seven constitutional elections, more than a 1,000 Tribal members registered, ranging from 1,091 in March 2015 to more than 1,500 in July 2016.

A “unified” Tribal Council approved sending the proposal out to voters in August. The Tribe held four hybrid in-person/Zoom educational meetings in October with two

being held in Grand Ronde, one in Portland and one in Salem.

The Nov. 2 election was the eighth time since 1999 that Tribal voters were asked to amend the Constitution. Only two proposals out of those previous seven votes that included 11 suggested amendments received the required two-thirds majority to alter the Tribe’s Constitution.

The constitutional amendment amends Article V, Section 5 to limit involuntary loss of membership to fraud and dual enrollment, and removes language regarding loss of membership for failure to meet enrollment criteria.

The proposal came in reaction to the divisive disenrollment proceedings that occurred in 2015 during which Tribal members were provisionally disenrolled. Eventually, the Tribal Court of Appeals ruled that the Tribal members who were identified for disenrollment because they allegedly did not meet enrollment criteria were to remain in the Tribe because the government had waited too long to start proceedings against them.


Unlike regular Tribal Council elections, a constitutional amendment election was supervised by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, which required Tribal members to register separately to vote.

In March 2015, Tribal members were asked to remove the Bureau of Indian Affairs from supervising Grand Ronde constitutional amendment elections, but the proposal was overwhelmingly rejected with 62.4 percent wanting to retain federal oversight. ■

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