

Round Dance is a ceremony first and foremost

ROUND DANCE continued from front page

Head staff for this year's Round Dance will be Tribal member and Cultural Resource's Cultural Advisor Bobby Mercier as pipe-man, Chase Sayer as stickman and Devon Bellerose as master of ceremonies. As many as 18 guest singers have been invited.

The event is hosted by the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde and its Youth Empowerment & Prevention Program.

The first Agency Creek Round Dance was held in April 2003 and subsequently held annually until the pandemic forced the cancellation of the event in 2020, '21 and '22.

The event is an opportunity for Tribal members to dance with their ancestors as they join hands and circle around drummers throughout the evening and early into the next morning.

The event, which also is a celebration of sobriety and community health and wellness, regularly attracts 400 to 500 attendees.

Most importantly, organizers

want people to know the Round Dance is a ceremony first and foremost.

"It's a whole ceremony in itself, it's not just a bunch of people coming together and singing," Mercier said in a 2016 *Smoke Signals* story about the Round Dance. "For us here, we want to do it right. It also ties back to other ceremonies like the Ghost Dance; that's how powerful that Round Dance is."

Mercier was responsible for starting the Round Dance tradition in Grand Ronde because of the healing nature of the ceremony and what it can do for a Tribal community.

"All of Friday until midnight and all of Saturday until midnight is the time that we are dancing with our ancestors, we're dancing with those spirits and it is to bring that healing and teaching back. That's why people get up and dance – it's a healing dance," Mercier said.

To hear Mercier discuss more about Round Dance, visit www.speaker.com/show/smokesignal-spodcast and search for Episode 8. ■

Council OKs construction of homes for McPherson Road development

By Danielle Harrison

Smoke Signals assistant editor/staff writer

It has taken longer than anticipated, but the first phase of a new housing development at McPherson Road is expected to be complete by the end of this year.

Tribal Council adopted a resolution at its Wednesday, Feb. 22, meeting to amend a construction contract with Willamina-based Scholten Construction to include all work for 15 homes in phase one of the project for a cost of \$6.85 million.

A previous July 2022 agreement with the company included an allocation of \$1.2 million to fund site work only at the Tribe's home ownership development for 20 homes. Site work includes things such as laying the foundations and other improvements. The other five homes are being built by Tribal members who purchased the sites.

"Five Tribal members are moving ahead under their own steam to construct those homes," Tribal Engineering and Planning Manager Ryan Webb said at a Tuesday, Feb. 21, Legislative Action Committee meeting. "So this will build out all 20 of the homes in phase one."

It's been 25 years since Grand Meadows, located on Tribal property at McPherson and Grand Ronde roads, opened a 36-lot manufactured home subdivision to Tribal families. Housing Department officials have repeatedly said another development is long overdue.

In 2020, Reece and Associates of Albany was selected to conduct a property development plan for the new site. The first phase will have 20 single-family homes on 10,000-square-foot lots.

The Tribe's current housing options typically have occupation rates of 94 percent or higher, and lack of available market-rate homes has been a sticking point in Tribal members moving to Grand Ronde and working in the community.

Tribal Council also set the agenda for the Sunday, March 5, General Council meeting, which will feature

a presentation by the Education Department. The 11 a.m. hybrid meeting will be held in Tribal Council Chambers and via Zoom.

In other action, Tribal Council:

- Approved amendments to the Tribal building code. The last update was done in 2010. The amendments will reflect updates to applicable state codes, adhere to current Tribal operations, require contractors to be licensed by the state of Oregon and provide penalties for ordinance violations;
- Approved an agreement with the Department of Housing and Urban Development that awards \$2 million to the Tribe for infrastructure and utilities improvements at its Blue Heron property, Tumwata Village, in Oregon City;
- Approved a third amendment to the Department of the Interior self-governance funding agreement between the Tribe and the Bureau of Indian Affairs Northwest Regional Office. This year, the Tribe will receive \$2.96 million;
- Declared Friday, March 10, to be the next Tribal per capita date to cover the period between Dec. 1 and Feb. 28. The per capita amount will not be known until after March 1;
- Appointed Westley Shaw to serve on the Fish & Wildlife Committee with a term ending on March 31, 2024;
- And enrolled three infants in the Tribe because they meet the enrollment requirements under the Tribal Constitution and Enrollment Ordinance.

Also included in the Feb. 22 Tribal Council packet was an approved authorization to proceed that increases the dental benefit in the Tribal member health plan by \$500. The increase will require a \$2.5 million supplemental budget for the health plan.

To watch the entire meeting, visit the Tribal government's website at www.grandronde.org and click on the Government tab and then Videos. ■

Tribal nonemergency text line

The Grand Ronde Tribal Police Department has a nonemergency text line at 541-921-2927.

"If you have a nonemergency situation or question, feel free to contact my officer via text through this line," said Grand Ronde Tribal Police Chief Jake McKnight. "When one of my officers receives the text, they will call you back when they have time."

McKnight said that emergency situations still require calling 911. For more information, contact McKnight at 503-879-1474. ■



You're invited to
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A celebration of local food, farmers, hunting & gathering

Saturday, March 25th
from 10 AM - 2 PM at the Tribal Gym

Free and open to all community members

- Cooking Demonstrations
- Educational Workshops
- Informational booths
- Free community meal

Organized by Grand Ronde's Food Access and Community Team, Sponsored by Marion-Polk Food Share & The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde



CTGR Cultural Resources

PORTLAND AREA GATHERING TRIPS 2023

- April - Hazel
- May - Cedar
- June - Camas
- July - Serviceberries
- August - Huckleberries
- August (Eugene) - Juncus and Tule
- September (Ashland) - Pine Nuts
- September - Wapato

No experience necessary. If you are interested in attending or learning more, email greg.archuleta@grandronde.org or find the CTGR Lifeways group on Facebook