

Native American speaks on behalf of her tribe

■ A member of the Pawnee and Otoe-Missouria nations shows her Web site for the first time publicly at the UO

By Brooke Ross
Oregon Daily Emerald

Anna Lee Walters patiently waited for the audience to quiet down as she stood in front of a crowd of 50 on Friday in Grayson Hall. When she began speaking, her voice floated clearly through the room and captured everyone's attention.

Walters, a Native American author and instructor at Diné College in Tsaile, Ariz., presented her new Web site for the first time publicly Friday afternoon at the University. It is an accomplishment for herself,

“I write for myself, and being Otoe-Missouria and Pawnee, it's always from that perspective.”

Anna Lee Walters
Native American author,
Diné College instructor

for her people of the Pawnee and Otoe-Missouria nations and for women throughout the world. She also spoke about her writing of Native American experiences.

Her presentation, along with her husband Harry Walter's speech on environmental issues, was sponsored by the history department and various University groups.

Walters has been writing stories that reflect the values of her tribal people since she was 17. But she has now taken her need to convey the message of her people one step further by creating her own Web site, www.womanearth.org. It is written in both the Pawnee and the Otoe-Missouria languages.

One part of the Web site focuses

on Native American women and shows all the stages of a woman's life, from a young girl to an elderly woman. The section of the site is in the format of a lesson to teach visitors about the Pawnee language. There are also lessons in the Otoe-Missouria language.

This is something new for Walters because most tribal Web sites are made by men.

“To do this is very different,” she said. “It breaks a lot of rules.”

In a typical tribal atmosphere, she said, if she wants to convey information to the group, she will speak through a male family member.

With her Web site, she speaks through no one.

“This is one reason why I wanted to do the Web site from a woman's perspective,” she said.

Walters said she chose not to do the site in English because her intended audience is the Pawnee and Otoe-Missouria people. She is legally registered as Pawnee.

“I didn't want to explain to anyone what I was doing,” she said. “Kind of like writing a story, I just wanted to go right into it.”

Walters said she is concerned about what her people will think of the Web site. So she included a photograph of her grandmother because many of the Pawnee people will recognize her and know that Walters is a genuine member of their nation.

“Everything I do reflects on the people, so I am always conscious of that,” she said.

Although Walters said everything she does, including her writing, is done for the Native American audience first, she writes in English because it is easier for her and because there are very few readers of her tribal languages.

“I write for myself, and being Otoe-Missouria and Pawnee, it's always from that perspective,” she said.

Matthew Dennis, an associate



Chrystal McConnell Emerald

Author Anna Lee Walters spoke Friday at Grayson Hall about her most recent novels on Native American issues and presented her new Web site on Pawnee and Otoe-Missouria women. Though bucking tribal customs, her site speaks with a native woman's voice.

history professor at the University, said one reason the history department wanted Walters to speak was that she would provide a different perspective than the history professors.

“It's very important to try to represent the diverse community that we have on campus and introduce other voices, native voices in our conversations,” Dennis said.

Sophomore Bryce Arndt, who watched Walters' presentation, said she admires everything Walters has done for her people and for women in general.

“She's saying she's a voice for her people because they have not had a voice for so long,” she said.

Though Walters primarily writes for a Native American audience, she said it is also important for

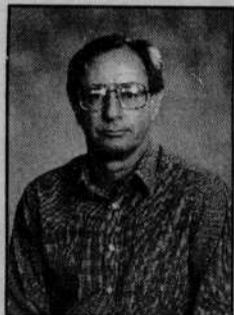
everyone to be familiar with other cultures. Anyone can learn Pawnee words on the Web site, but it is intended to reconnect her own people with the linguistic aspect of their heritage.

“Other cultures present other ways of living, and that's worthwhile,” she said. “If this encourages people to speak the language, if it just does that, that's enough.”

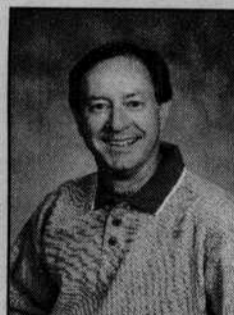
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