



Courtesy photos by Kathy Kentta

Matt Garrett: “Tribal ceremony stuff was special to me because I never knew that stuff was still done today and I never got to experience it until I went on this trip.”

Apolinar Howell: “We learned a lot about our people’s traditional practices. It was an honor to connect with the land, the opportunity was nothing less than immersive. I enjoyed connecting with other youth in addition to getting to hold interesting dialogue with an important elder. All around it was fun and educational.”



Courtesy photos by Jeanine Moy

Above: Joshley Howell, Sharla Strong and Corey Strong in a field of yampah

Below: Yampah root



Youth help protect traditional foods through Healthy Traditions leadership camp

By Sharla Strong, Healthy Traditions Program Volunteer

I held my breath and watched, knowing what an honor it was to be a witness. I knew I should be taking pictures, but if I looked away for a moment, I would miss it. To some, it was a moment that may appear small, but for me, it was like watching history.

He smiled at us with shy eyes and said it tasted like a carrot. It could be that this was the first time in more than 150 years a Siletz youth had tasted this traditional food, commonly called yampah.

The July heat radiated from the dry cracked earth as the youth circled around to combine the seed they had gathered from the field and we thanked them for their hard work. This is important work. They may not quite understand it now at their young age, but they are healing the land and protecting our traditional foods for future generations and I am proud of them.

Healthy Traditions Project Coordinator Kathy Kentta worked for a year to plan and fund the Youth Leadership Camp where youth collected seeds of traditional foods, learned about environmental pro-

tection from a Siletz elder and learned about the Jordan Cove LNG Export Terminal and Pipeline proposal that would impact our cultural resources.

The Youth Leadership Camp started at Vesper Meadow, located east of Ashland, Ore. Jeanine Moy, director of the Vesper Meadow Restoration and Education Program, took the youth on a tour of the Vesper Meadow property where youth saw wildlife and learned about different restoration projects being done throughout the area.

Vesper Meadow is located near the headwaters of Dead Indian Creek and also the headwaters for two major northwest Pacific Coast watersheds: the Rogue River and Klamath River basins. Shasta, Takelma, Molala and Latgawa ancestors likely could have visited and gathered foods within this area.

In testimony from elder Molly Orton documented in 1933 by ethnographer John Peabody Harrington, she describes a favorite camas gathering place that has a likeness to Vesper Meadows. Youth assisted with camas seed collection, which is an important aspect of restoring our traditional food population and the youth learned about protecting plant

diversity by planting seed near where it was collected.

Camas is a common food for Tribes of the Pacific Northwest and has many different names from different Tribal languages. The Siletz Dee-ni language name is gus, pronounced like “goose.”

For thousands of years, camas meadows were managed by local Tribes and grew in great abundance. Caucasian explorers Lewis and Clark made notes on many plants in their travels and the distinct blue/violet flower color of camas was noted by Lewis:

“The quawmash (Chopunnish word for camas) is now in blume and from the colour ... at a short distance it resembles lakes of fine clear water, so complete is this despection that on first sight I could have sworn it was water.” Meriwether Lewis, June 12, 1806

On one of the afternoons, Siletz Tribal elder Grandma Agnes Baker Pilgrim, and her daughter, Nadine Martin, joined the youth for lunch. Grandma Aggie just celebrated her 95th birthday and also recently received the President’s Award from

Southern Oregon University’s president, Dr. Linda Schott.

The youth introduced themselves to Grandma Aggie and they enjoyed hearing how she knew their families and grandparents. Jon Duarte shared that, “She reminded me of my grandma.”

Grandma Aggie’s visit added a richness to the educational experience by sharing about her work on environmental protection and especially about the need to take care of our water. It is especially inspiring for youth to see an elder doing work to improve the world and she called on the youth to take care of each other and to speak kind words.

Many of the youth had great things to say about what they learned from Grandma Aggie. Nevaeh Jackson said, “Grandma Aggie taught us that we are all born water babies.”

Grandma Aggie spoke about the importance of water and how we are all born “water babies” in our mother’s belly and it is from water that we are born and how all life is sustained. She said we need to be thankful to water, even when we are using small amounts of water for washing.