

CLOSE TO HOME



Wi Taepa, Maori artist.



Maori artist Baye Riddell.



Maori artist Carla Ruka.



Maori artist Rhonda Halliday.

Indigenous artists visit Astoria



DAVID CAMPICHE PHOTOS

The Dragon Kiln.

By **DAVID CAMPICHE**
FOR COAST WEEKEND

The first couple came to Astoria this fall from Tasmania, a land far away, bright-eyed and hair tousled and intelligent — artist Neil Hoffmann, potter and sculptor, and his lovely wife, Ann.

And behind them, early in October, came the Maori, nine artists returning from New Zealand after a three-year absence.

They have become comrades, friends and devotees of a bridge between artists and distant communities — hands reaching across oceans to reunite with our art community, to share commonalities.

The Maori reunion began with a bilingual welcoming at the ancient Chinook cove at Fort Columbia. The rendezvous was as rich as the landscape. Tony Johnson of the Chinook Nation gave the welcoming in the ancient language of his people. Baye Riddell, a Maori elder, answered in his own tongue.

Richard Rowland and his wife, Patti, arranged the visits with help from friends. Richard is a respected potter known by many artists in the Pacific Northwest who teaches at Clatsop Community College. He is a man of deep passion and skill. Patti stands beside Richard, as strong a contributor to the arts community as one can find.

Who else but the Rowlands remain so committed to opening arms and minds to the greater community of indigenous artists? Like

a fastball snagged in the web of a baseball glove, they corral talent.

The recipients of this love and art are the residents of the Columbia-Pacific community, you and me. And maybe the world at large. How lucky we are!

Richard and Patti are empowered by a sense of comradeship, drawing a circle around art and fine craftsmanship and human relationships. For decades, the couple have engaged the power of art. They have delivered it, often funding the rendezvous out of their own pockets.

The power of art

Stop a second and think about those illuminating words: the power of art. After storms and wars, after earthquakes and pestilence, what is left is the best of us: our art, architecture, ancient sandstone carvings, 11th century cathedrals, Giotto's stucco murals adorning walls of Italian chapels. And Picasso paintings. Canvases by Masaccio, Leonardo and Jackson Pollack. By Matisse and Caravaggio.

Not all have survived. When my wife created my Facebook page, we named it "Pottery Survives."

Last month a museum in Argentina burned down to the stone walls. Gone were two million artifacts. Buried also was a legacy. One art historian declared how he wept for two solid days. Wars! Devastation, human and

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