

Meeting of Leaders

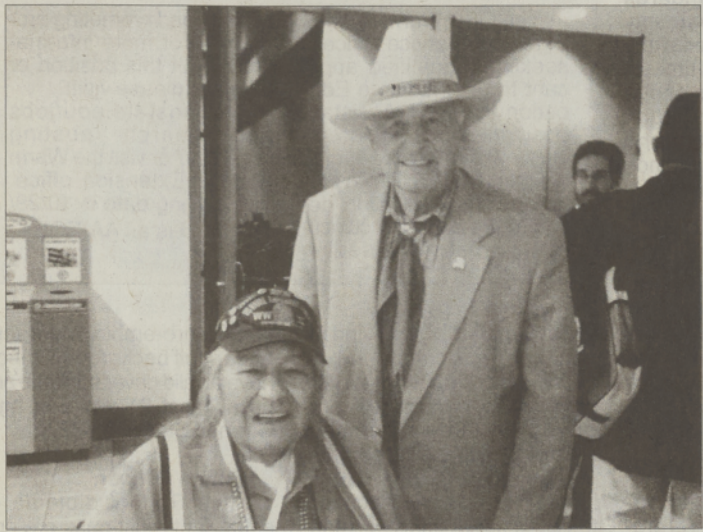


Photo courtesy Councilwoman Aurolyn Stwyer-Pinkham.

Wasco Chief Nelson Wallulatum (left) met former U.S. Senator Ben Nighthorse Campbell at the recent National Congress of the American Indian. Chief Wallulatum has served on the Tribal Council of the Confederated Tribes for over 50 years. Mr. Campbell was a U.S. Senator from Colorado from 1993 until 2005. For some time he was the only Native American serving in the U.S. Congress.

Tribes preserve Okla. battle site

OKLAHOMA CITY (AP) — National recognition of the Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes for their work on the Washita Battlefield in Oklahoma is just one more step in a long process toward accurately portraying the deadly clash between Native Americans and the U.S. Army more than 140 years ago, according to two men who helped develop the area into a National Parks Service unit.

The National Trust presented the Preservation Honor Award to the tribes last week at the 2009 National Preservation Conference in Nashville, Tenn., for their work on the Washita Battlefield.

The battlefield was the site of the Nov. 27, 1868, attack launched by Lt. Col. George Custer on Cheyenne Chief Black Kettle's winter encampment along the banks of the Washita River. Historical accounts differ on a death toll, but some say 100 Cheyenne and 21 soldiers were killed and dozens of others were taken prisoner. The tribe's lodges, teepees and other belongings were burned and their herd of 800 horses were shot.

Also last week, the National Trust recognized the tribes for their efforts

to preserve the history of the Battle of Sand Creek in Colorado four years earlier, when 100 Cheyenne were killed.

"One reason I worked so hard and many Cheyenne worked to get the battlefield as a unit of the National Parks Service is we need to understand the clash of cultures and when people can't learn to live together and find peaceful ways out of a dilemma," said Bob Blackburn, executive director of the Oklahoma Historical Society, and one of the people who worked to preserve the site.

Blackburn said the Battle of Washita River was part of a strategy by the military to stem the tide of raids by Indian tribes on westward-migrating settlers.

According to historians, Black Kettle wanted peace, but some tribal warriors participated in deadly raids on white settlements before the Washita battle.

Maj. Gen. Philip Sheridan, Custer's superior, decided to "teach them a lesson," Blackburn said.

"Custer was assigned to attack the tribe in the winter camp because they had such trouble engaging southern Plains tribes during the spring, summer and fall," Blackburn said. "The tribes

had horses, they were mobile and knew the land."

Some Cheyennes escaped across a large field toward some hills. One, 13-year-old Magpie, got away when he shot a soldier who was trying to decapitate him and another boy, said Lawrence Hart, director of the Cheyenne Cultural Center in Clinton.

"Magpie stuck the pistol in the trooper's abdomen and fired, then he and his friend got on the soldier's horse and escaped," Hart said.

Magpie returned and found the bodies of Black Kettle and his wife, Medicine Woman Later, in the river. He and others buried them in unmarked graves, Hart said.

"We have lots of stories like that in our oral tradition and we're really glad that our stories can be told," Hart said.

Hart accompanied Blackburn to Washington twice to testify before a House subcommittee about the importance of preserving the area's history.

"When I went to testify before Congress the first time, I spoke over their heads," Hart said. "When I started trying to find a parallel, it was difficult and so they couldn't understand and had no concept of a massacre."

Tribe breaking ground for health center

NEW TOWN, N.D. (AP) — The Three Affiliated Tribes are breaking ground for a \$20 million health center on the Fort Berthold Reservation.

Congress earlier this year approved \$17 million for the project. The Army

Corps of Engineers will build the health center and then turn it over to the Indian Health Service.

The center will be named for the community of Elbowoods, which was flooded when Garrison Dam was built.

NCAI appoints new recording secretary

SIOUX FALLS, S.D. (AP) — The president of the Oglala Sioux Tribe, Theresa Two Bulls, has been chosen recording secretary of the National Congress of American Indians for the

2009-2011 term.

In a release, the tribe says Two Bulls was selected during the 66TH annual NCAI midyear conference in Palm Springs, Calif.

Panel will advise about remains

ANN ARBOR, Mich. (AP) — A University of Michigan advisory committee will address ethical and scientific concerns related to the storage of ancient Native American remains.

The university says in a statement that the group will advise Vice President for Research Stephen Forrest

on requests from Native American tribes for the transfer of remains. The school's Museum of Anthropology stores about 1,400 remains that are 800 to 3,000 years old.

The university has declared the remains "culturally unidentifiable." But Michigan tribes have accused the school of violating the federal Native

American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) by failing to consult with them before making that declaration.

Ongoing discussions indicate NAGPRA rules will change. Forrest says he isn't sure how or when that will happen, and the university wants to be prepared for any changes.

Coquille Tribe harvesting organic cranberries

CHARLESTON, Ore. (AP) — Aiming to capitalize on a growing demand for raw, organic produce, the Coquille Tribe is taking the hard route to harvesting cranberries this season.

To harvest deep red berries in the raw, the tribe will put its back into the year's bountiful crop through a technique called dry-picking, which hasn't been practiced in about 10 years.

"The work is much more labor-intensive," said Bill Snyder, manager of Coquille Cranberries, located in the heart of the Coquille Tribal Reservation near Charleston.

Oregon's bumper crop this season is due to heavy spring pollination and a long growing season. However, last year's record harvests in Wisconsin and Massachusetts, combined with the downturn in the economy, has left a

surplus, which will squeeze the market this year, Snyder said.

The growing demand for fresh, organic produce could help buck the competition.

"Organic cranberries are a real thin slice of the total production in Oregon and nationally, so there was a niche there they wanted to maintain," Snyder said.

The traditional method would be to flood the bogs, causing the berries to float to the surface and corral them so they can be lifted by an elevator and dumped into a truck. It's the most efficient method if the goal is to produce a product to be used in juice or jelly.

To harvest the fruit dry, it is imperative the berries have no contact with moisture throughout the harvesting process.

"It's literally a dry berry," Snyder said. "With water, the fruit breaks down quickly."

Berries aren't picked until the sun burns the dew off the ground.

"We started picking this morning just after 11 a.m. and we'll pick until we run out of daylight or until a dense fog rolls in again," Snyder said on Friday.

The unconventional strategy of dry-picking requires a host of new machinery, which the tribe is renting, and more contract workers, presumably with strong backs.

Workers guide a mechanic berry collector, called a furford, up and down six 10-acre bogs. The device has a ro-

tating belt that plucks fruit from the ground in two-foot swaths and spits the berries into burlap sacks. The sacks are unloaded once they reach their 50- to 60- pound capacity and are hauled to the cleaning station, where they are hefted up one by one and emptied into a viner.

The viner shakes out the vegetation, drops the berries onto a conveyor belt, which spills them into a crate.

Crates are stacked, packed and transported to Wilt Farm in Corvallis, where the berries are sorted by size, packaged and delivered to markets.

Eugene-based Organically Grown will distribute the berries, which will be sold at Whole Foods, Market of Choice

and Fred Meyer, among other grocers.

As a certified organic grower, Coquille Cranberries abides by strict production standards set forth by Quality Assurance International, certified by the USDA. It forbids the use of synthetic stimulants and encourages an eco-friendly growing practice.

"Personally, I like to buy organic," Snyder said. "It's a tastier food. And, typically, organic (caters) to a more local market."

This season, Coquille Cranberries expects to produce about 100,000 pounds — an increase over last year's 30,000 pounds — and generate about \$250,000 in revenue.

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