

## NATIVE NEWS FROM ACROSS THE NATION

### Volunteers Help Dig into Oregon History

REEDSPORT, OR. (AP) — Volunteers wield trowels to scrape away layers of earth, sift the dirt from neat, square holes, and then bag and label the pieces of history they find at the Umpqua River North Spit, once known as Fort Umpqua.

Among the treasures discovered by 17 volunteers working in the area recently were children's marbles, tacks the soldiers exchanged for goods from their Indian neighbors and bullets from the Springfield Model 1855 rifles, which were the latest in weaponry when Fort Umpqua was established in 1856.

The volunteers are participating in a U.S. Forest Service's "Passport in Time" program supervised by Siuslaw National Forest archaeologist Phyllis Steeves.

The volunteers get free archaeological training, learn a lot of history and have the satisfaction of knowing that they are helping document what happened in a specific area long ago, Steeves said. In return, the Forest

Service archaeologists get helpers who have a wide variety of skills, she said.

"I've just been excavating Pit 37 the whole time I've been here," said Jan Schultz of Reno, who described herself as a 62-year-old retired housewife who should have become an archaeologist but didn't.

The fort was the southern outpost for a 1.1 million-acre Indian reservation stretching along the Oregon Coast from Cape Lookout near Tillamook to the Siltcoos River south of Florence.

As many as 300 soldiers were assigned to the fort, which was built next to Umpqua City, a trading center touted by developers as destined to become the San Francisco of the Pacific Northwest.

The fort closed in 1862 when the troops were assigned to fight in the Civil War and the government auctioned off the buildings. The two-story 40-foot-by-40-foot log blockhouse was moved to Gardiner and was turned into a sawmill.

Many of the other buildings were converted to civilian use or razed for salvage. Umpqua City never lived up to its grand expectations; the residents moved away and nature reclaimed the area.

Generations of Reedsport area residents have explored the North Spit and found relics from the fort, early white settlers and an Indian village. But it wasn't until 1996 that archaeological work directed by Steeves began to provide a detailed record of the area's history.

Steeves hopes that after a few more years she will have enough material to nominate the area for National Historic District status.

That won't give the area any more protection than it already has as part of the Oregon Dunes National Recreation Area, Steeves said, but it will raise the level of public awareness about its rich history.

"There are stories here we shouldn't forget, that we shouldn't ignore," she said.

### Indians Camp to Guard Remains

WAKPALA, S.D. (AP) — Some members of the Standing Rock Indian Reservation are camping out to watch over American Indian remains, which have been falling out of eroding cliffs along Lake Oahe.

Valerie Hill Big Shield, whose Sioux name is Warrior Woman, is living in a camp with her three sons and husband, Leroy.

They and others in similar camps along the shoreline are there to keep looters away. They patrol the shoreline of Lake Oahe to find bones and guard them until Tribal medicine men arrive for ceremonies of purification and reburial.

Valerie's family members Clifton, John and Kalief Hill keep a meticulous log of who has come and gone from the camp.

"It's peaceful. But it's sad, too," said John Hill.

The family is prepared to stay.

"I'm going to sit out here until we care for all the bones. I know there's a lot more in the water," John Hill said.

Remains of at least nine American Indians have been exposed, purified and reburied.

There is some dispute about the origin of the bones.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is now saying they are from an earlier encampment of Arikara and not from descendants of Sioux Chief Mad Bear.

Only time will tell if about \$500,000 worth of rip-rap will finally secure a lasting resting spot for any other American Indians still under the ground there. Rip-rap is large boulders used to stabilize ground along riverbanks and other sensitive areas.

"We are moving as fast as we can, within rules and regulations," said John Bartel, Oahe Project Manager at Pierre. "It's our No. 1 priority."

The corps must follow the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act when human remains are uncovered. The act sets out the process in notifying lineal descendants and Tribes, the recovery of items, repatriation and reburial.

In the meantime, members of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe are re-burying the bones under an inter-Tribal agreement that recognizes their integrity to sanctify remains even though the Tribes might be different.

Descendants of the Arikara are represented by Three Affiliated Tribes on Fort Berthold Indian Reservation in North Dakota.

Hill Big Shield said if she could build a house, she would spend the rest of her life living near the old burial grounds, protecting the remains of those who lived and died before her.

"I would just like my relatives to be at peace," she said.

#### EDITOR'S NOTE:

Across the country, high schools and colleges are starting to address the issues surrounding the use of Indian mascots for their sports teams. This is one of several issues at the forefront of Native news that *Smoke Signals* will be following.

In my experience, I have found that there are a variety of feelings on this topic among Native people. Some are offended and don't understand why the dominate culture doesn't seem to get it. Others are not offended and wear their Indian logo items proudly.

Personally, the only name that I have a problem with is the name "Redskins." This name is meant to be de-

rogatory and just because the use of this name has become, in a sense, traditional doesn't mean it is right. There would never be a name used that was derogatory to African Americans, Asian Americans or Hispanic Americans. Yet, for some reason it is okay for a professional team in the nation's capitol to be offensive to Native Americans.

No matter which side of the issue you are on, we will try to keep you informed of these events throughout the nation as they happen. If you have an opinion that you wish to share, please write a letter to the editor regarding this topic.

### School Board Votes to Drop Redskins Nickname for Sports Teams

SCARBOROUGH, ME. (AP) — The local school board recently voted unanimously to drop the nickname Redskins for sports teams at Scarborough High School.

The nickname, which has been used at the school since 1938, has come under criticism as being offensive to American Indians.

School board members voted 5-0 to change the name, despite a survey earlier this year, which found that high school students favored

retaining it by a margin of more than 2 to 1.

"I think there will be some citizens that will be upset by what we did," said Deborah Jackson, the school board chairwoman. She quoted a student as saying, "What is correct is not always popular, and what is popular is not always correct."

The vote came after a series of public meetings.

School districts across the country have been pressed by Indian groups

to change team names such as Redskins, Braves, Chiefs and others that refer to American Indians. Redskins is considered the most offensive of the nicknames and some groups have threatened lawsuits.

Scarborough is one of three high schools in Maine with Redskins for a team name and mascot. The other two, Wiscasset and Sanford, have rejected proposals to drop the name.

A committee at Scarborough High School will meet to consider a new nickname for its teams.

### La Crosse School District Drops Indian Mascot

LA CROSSE, WI. (AP) — The Tomah School District's Indian logo will be dropped, along with all the other conference mascots that have been displayed on the gymnasium wall of a La Crosse high school, the local school board recently decided.

Some students had complained that the Tomah logo was racist and offensive to American Indians.

The La Crosse Native American Student Association asked in August that the logo be removed from the display.

La Crosse high schools stopped using American Indian-related mascots several years ago, in one case replacing an Indian warrior with a knight in 1994 to portray Central High School's Red Raiders.

But the Tomah mascot continued to be displayed on the wall of Central High School's gymnasium along with logos of all the other Mississippi Valley Conference schools.

Logan High School has a banner that lists only school names, not logos, Superintendent Tom Downs said.

He said it would cost \$1,500 to \$2,000 to get a similar banner for Central.

Much of the debate centered on what type of policy the board should adopt to get rid of the logo.

Downs recommended removing all logos so the issue didn't create animosity between the two districts.

Tomah School District officials have said they meet annually with local Ho-Chunk Tribal Elders who said they were not offended by the logo, so the district continues to use it.