

# Elder's Housing Graced with New Murals

■ Artist Ann Murray brings Hollywood experience to Grand Ronde.

By Chris Mercier

The laid back, natural setting of the Elder's Housing complex just got a little bit brighter — and more artistic. New murals adorn the gables of four of the buildings and have given the Elder's a splash of color.

Artist Ann Murray was commissioned by the Grand Ronde Tribal Housing Authority in February to do what she does best, paint murals. And her canvas this time was a select few of the Elder's homes, notably the quadraplexes at Coyote, Beaver, and Blue Jay Courts, and the triplex at Eagle Loop.

"We looked at proposals from several different artists in October," said Housing Director Linda Layden, who also served on the committee that screened potential artists. "And Ann was a unanimous selection."

The idea, Layden said, was actually part of the original plan of Elder's Housing. When designed, a number of the homes offered wide and bare gables — perfect for artwork. HUD (Housing and Urban Development), Layden added, encouraged the Tribe to incorporate cultural elements into the scheme, and provided the \$8,000 to commission Murray for the project.

Murray's only limitation has been to paint something low-key that would compliment the architecture, and not distract from it. The designs do just that, taking their inspiration from the animal street names.

Eagle Loop features a pair of bald eagles. Coyote Court boasts a noble canine. Blue Jay Court provides two of the crested birds. And Beaver Court shows a fine representation of the industrious namesake.

The animals don't stand alone in their backdrops. The centerpiece paintings are framed by basket weaving designs, traditional Grand Ronde no less, modest yet appreciable.

"Murray has been so easy to work with," Layden said. "She has been very responsive to our ideas."



Photo by Willie Mercier

**New Art** — The new Elder's housing complex got a touch of color added to the surroundings when artist Ann Murray recently completed a set of four large murals depicting local wildlife in natural settings. The murals have been placed on the largest of the gables at the four centerpiece buildings.

There are still openings available for Elder's housing.

There is no waiting list.

Contact the Tribal Housing Authority at 503-879-2401.

Although based in Camas, Washington, Murray has left her mark at numerous venues in Oregon. Two of her most famous and largest murals grace the buildings of downtown Springfield. The Oregon Rivers Museum commissioned her to create a truly memorable portrait of the McKenzie River. And the other, is an enormous piece located on the side of the Sutton Block Building, she painted for the City of Springfield. It is a highly detailed visual chronology of the Oregon Trail.

For the artist herself, this project has served as a series of firsts. Due to the erratic weather and chilly winter in general, Murray was unable

to paint the murals directly on the houses. Rather, she painted the works at home and transported them piece by piece from Camas to Grand Ronde, much like an enormous jigsaw puzzle. Furthermore, this has marked Murray's first real time spent in the Grand Ronde area, and she is predisposed to it rather favorably.

"I just love this area," she said after I stopped by one afternoon. "Been perfect."

Murray was in the process of doing touch-up work on the murals. She pointed out detail that tends to go unnoticed — the color coordination of the basket weaving frames and banners and the trim on the

houses. They match to a shade.

"That's just one of those small things I like to do," she said rather casually.

A conversation with Murray revealed a genuine eccentricity, which at times seems a must for the artistic types. She has been involved in art for the bulk of her life, and while maybe "slowing down" in her own words, would probably never entirely give it up. This project in particular has offered time for reflection.

"I've worked many hours on this," she said.

Smaller murals, stained glass, fiber optics, and painting scenes on furniture could be the wave of Murray's future, but she is reluctant to say. The only given remains that Murray, who has also worked as a scenic artist for two Hollywood productions, won't be returning to the film industry anytime soon.

"Movies are for the young," she said. "You gotta stay up into the late hours, and then get up early in the morning."

"And it is wasteful," she added.

On the set of one movie, *Skylark* starring Christopher Walken and Glenn Close, Murray remembers the studio had to destroy 20 acres of Kansas grassland to give the appearance of a drought. Not surprisingly, it turned her off to the business, among other things.

For now, she is happy to paint, and engage in political discussions.

"I have to say, I really like my life right now," she said, and then turned to finish up.

One thing is certain; she won't be forgotten around here anytime soon.

■ The Grand Ronde Tribal Housing Authority has plans to hold a reception for Murray this summer. It will be an opportunity for Tribal members to meet the artist and view the murals. The date of this event will be announced in an upcoming edition of *Smoke Signals*.

# Thomas Doty; A Man of Many Gestures and Words

By Justin Phillips



Thomas Doty

His voice broke through silence as it echoed back and forth several times in the Grand Ronde Elementary School gym. His body and facial gestures were as clear and real as diamonds in the sunlight.

Storyteller and poet Thomas Doty has traveled the countryside performing *Dote & Coyote Stories from the Native West* since 1981. Doty recently stopped at Grand Ronde and Willamina public schools.

Doty has released several recordings, daily and weekly broadcasts on public radio and television, and has received a number of awards — including a *Lifetime Achievement Award* from the national *American Indian Program*. He has published many books and is included on the *Oregon Literary Map*.

"My stories are for people of all ages," said Doty. "Children delight in the mythic adventures of Coyote and Bear and Crow. Adults look beyond the narrative to see what the stories offer a world searching for solutions."

Doty performs at libraries and educational institutions, hospitals and community centers, theaters and museums, conferences, churches and camps, pow-wows and festivals — anywhere people like stories.

Performances are staged simply: no set, not props. They come alive with movements, gestures, expressions, voices and the words of the stories.

Stories are focused through humor and drama.

Doty performed for students in kindergarten to fifth grades. Doty also performed at the Willamina High School.



Photos by Justin Phillips

**Storyteller** — Accomplished storyteller Thomas Doty recently entertained students at the Grand Ronde Elementary School with his unique blend of vocal stimulation and physical presence. Doty is well known as a recording artist, author and performer who travels the country sharing his stories with children and adults.