

Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow; Cultural Program Works On Many Projects

Cultural Department continued from front page

as audio and visual remembrances. And while part of the process is to collect all existing examples that can be located, the department also catalogues all these items for cross-referencing and makes them available to Tribal members and the public in a variety of ways.

If more than 10,000 years of history have shown us anything, it is that important cultural sites are spread far and wide. Federal law now requires any project using federal funding — whether road or building or golf course — consult with Tribes to make sure important cultural sites are protected. The Site Protection team works on these issues.

Language is a most basic component of the culture. The pre-school Chinuk wawa immersion program and adult language classes are examples of ways the department is resurrecting and preserving this language and preparing the community to use it and pass it on.

Overall, said Olson, the idea is “to help Tribal people reclaim traditional ideas about life so they can teach that to their children.”

The department’s ongoing projects are almost constantly interrupted by short- and long-term projects. Some of the current ones include the Fort Yamhill project (See SS, 9/1/02); possible creation of an exhibit at the casino to tell the Grand Ronde story; the Mission Mill Museum basket exhibit and the Summers Collection (see stories this issue).

CULTURAL COLLECTIONS

The Tribes’ cultural collections include 1,100 objects, 3,500 historic (pre-1950) photographs, more than 20,000 pages of archival documents and historic records, 385 bound volumes of local history books, and 110 oral history (audio and visual) pieces, according to **Cultural Collections Specialist Lindy Trolan**. She and **Cultural Projects Assistant Kim Mueller** are responsible for acquiring, maintaining, preserving and sharing this cultural heritage.

Keeping track of all this requires photographing each piece and recording as much information about the piece as is available. The department is making an effort to share information with Tribal members and the community.

“We have this wealth of information,” said Olson. “It is important that we start sharing this.”

Current projects for Trolan include an upcoming reprinting of the Harold Mackey book, *The Kalapuyans*. Published originally in 1974 and being reprinted later this year, the book this time will have some 50 pages of interpretive material developed by the Grand Ronde Tribes from the Tribal perspective.

Ultimately, the department foresees a Tribal museum for these collections, but in the meanwhile, creating exhibits for existing venues enables the Tribes to share parts of the collection with the community.

The department also sponsors and often leads cultural classes for Tribal members. Two students from a Tribal basket-making class — Tribal Elders Sam Henny and Connie Graves — are now teaching the skill to others.

SITE PROTECTION

Cultural Protection Specialist and Tribal member **Perri McDaniel** heads the section charged with evaluating sites for cultural significance and suggesting ways to preserve them in the face of anticipated development.



Connie Schultz

“We’re responsible for protecting and preserving cultural resources that are really important to the Tribe on and off Tribal lands,” said **Cultural Protection Specialist** and Tribal member **Connie Schultz**.

“One of the things that I think is really key to revitalizing our culture here is getting the people back in touch with our traditional ancestral homelands,” said McDaniel.

“Connection with the land is key.” These lands she said, extends “from the Columbia River to the California border, from the crest of the Coast Range to the crest of the Cascade Range.”

As information about a project or a potential project comes in, **GIS Specialist Josh Levy** takes the location and feeds it into the Geographic Information System (GIS), a mapping program that already is packed with information about important cultural and historical sites and other projects (See story on page 5). And from the orderly way that this information is collected and stored, McDaniel and Schultz can use it to effectively consult with those involved with the project in question.

For example, a current project on Sauvie Island is within a mile or two of culturally significant sites already in the system.

Last year, the department received almost 300 notifications. “There are thousands of cultural sites in western Oregon,” said Levy. “Currently, 1,500 are in the system.”

Occasionally, the Tribe and a building authority disagree on how to deal with certain sites and these rare disputes go to the state Historic Preservation office for mediation.

Schultz also works with the Tribe’s cemetery employees — on the restoration of an old stone, for example. She works with the Natural Resources Department, too, when cultural site protection issues come up.

“And we get a lot of calls from people who say they have found something. Josh or I will go out on these calls,” she said.

Levy brings to the department a background in plants as well as the programming essentials for operating the GIS system.

On one day, you might find Levy bent over the computer, but on another, he might be working on a traditional huckleberry picking area in the Willamette National Forest. He has been thinning trees, removing noxious weeds and experimenting with a variety of management techniques to see how traditional huckleberries respond best.

LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

When **Education Coordinator Tony Johnson** stepped to the door to speak English during the Chinuk wawa immersion class, pre-schoolers

Michael Reyes and Lauren Lucio told him in the Chinuk language in apparently no uncertain terms that he had no business speaking Boston wawa (English) in this Chinuk wawa immersion class. We stepped *completely* outside of the classroom.

With some 3,600 words in Chinuk wawa to choose from, the nine four and five year olds in the pre-school class have a grasp on a lot of

them. (See SS, 12-15-02.)

The key, going forward, according to Olson and

Johnson, is to develop the program so that it follows these children into kindergarten and on into grade school.

As it is, parents of these students sign a contract to work with the children at home on the language and the department offers adult Chinuk wawa classes on Monday nights from 5:30-8:30 p.m.

For **Language Specialist Jackie Whisler**, whose focus is the pre-school program, “feelings” are the start of her teaching efforts.

“I watch their faces,” she said. “We use so much love in there.”

Not a teacher by trade, Whisler keeps her eyes and ears open for the experience and wisdom of other teachers, in and out of the immersion program, to help her develop.

Exposed to words from the language like *muk-muk* (eat) all her life, Whisler remembered her interest growing in her twenties. She held language classes in her home during the time of Restoration. Elders would teach and then young parents would pass the words on to their children, she said.

Language Specialist Bobby Mercier works across many programs including pre-school, Before and After programs and adult classes. Like Whisler, Mercier has been exposed to elements of the language as long as he can remember and though he now recognizes that “it kind of came natural for me,” the key to getting him studying it was a very personal experience.

“Grandma (Tribal Elder Arthelia Clark) wasn’t doing too good (Arthelia passed away in December of 1999). I always wished I had learned (the language) so I could talk to her but I never did.”

He also saw that there were “good things happening in it (the language program) and good people doing it.”

“I really wanted my kids to have that opportunity to talk like the old people.”

Every week the entire team is involved with developing the lesson plans and creating activity sheets.

As this story developed, Mercier was working on some class displays that put pictures together with words.

Although Chinuk wawa “was the language that was used inter-Tribally,” said Johnson, “no other community is using this language the way we are. Grand Ronde is the only community where this language has survived.”

In addition to the language classes, this section of the department facilitates a number of other cultural classes for Tribal members. Drum, basket, moccasin, adz-making and beading classes are among them.

Development of a Chinuk wawa dictionary is also underway, but perhaps still a year or two from publication, according to Johnson. Like any language, Chinuk wawa is growing every day as people use it and struggle with naming things that did not exist years ago. While the language is strong and descriptive of so much in nature, it is constantly catching up with technology.

In addition, the department has developed “a considerable archive of all the languages of all of the original Tribes associated with early Grand Ronde,” said Johnson. The archive includes original documents that refer to more than 25 dialects, some unintelligible to us today.

Looking toward the future, the department has for years been developing ways to make the wealth of material available not only to Tribal members in the local area but to Tribal members everywhere.

“My role,” said Olson, “is looking at the demographics of our people and figure out how can we achieve that.”

“The far out dream,” she said, “is that all Tribal members can teach their children the Native view of life and be part of those day-to-day life ways.”

The department has been working for years to bring that vision to life via the Internet and full deployment may still be a few years off, according to Olson.

“We’re no longer in a village situation,” she said. “We are a modernized Tribe.” ■



Lindy Trolan



Josh Levy



Bobby Mercier



Kim Mueller



Tony Johnson



Perri McDaniel



Jackie Whisler