

Lane Community College Native American Coordinator Still After Campus Longhouse Funds

■ Frank Merrill keeps the fight alive, despite semi-retirement.

By Ron Karten

Frank Merrill, formerly and still the Native American Coordinator for Lane Community College (LCC), wanted more than anything to see a longhouse built on campus before he retired. Well, he retired at the end of June last year, but then came on half time the very next day. "They haven't even advertised the position," he said recently from his office.

LCC donated a nice piece of land on the northwest side of the college, and earmarked \$250,000 for the \$750,000-\$800,000 project. The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde pledged \$50,000 and another \$50,000 in matching funds but about \$450,000 remained to be raised when Merrill's retirement came last spring.

In the time since, the Coquille Tribe is considering contributions of materials and cash, the Klamath Tribe is also a possible contributor and one anonymous soul chipped in \$50,000.

"So word is finally getting out," said Merrill, "and once the word gets out, things are going to happen."

To make things easier for the Tribes without all that much to give, Merrill is proposing an installment plan.

"I have a good feeling about this right now," he said.

In the meantime, he remains a force in Native American affairs at LCC, and according to his assistant



Photo by Richard Archambault

Frank Merrill

at the college, Richard Archambault, Merrill's name will be placed on an Honor Wall within the Smithsonian's Museum of the American Indian which takes up the last available section along the Capitol Mall.

Merrill began his association with the college as a student in the 1970s and returned in 1992 as the program coordinator, according to Barbara Delansky, Director of Student Services for LCC. "Through his efforts," she wrote, "there is now a good support system in place for Native students at Lane, as well as opportunities for all students to

learn about Native American cultures. The college currently has over 10 classes on Native American culture and language as well as one of the largest pow-wows in the Northwest. With over 250 Native American students on campus, and another 350 or so who identify as part Native American, the longhouse would be a gathering spot for all students to learn about Native American culture as well as to provide additional classroom space to the college and a much needed resource to the community."

"What I see here," said Merrill, "is that our students are coming here in many many different fashions.

Some from dark holes (drugs, alcohol, ones that grab us families and everything), and we start putting those families together, and whatever it took to put everybody back in the balance so they can get on with their life. So, that's what it all became. Building up family circles and extending it into the families. If a family involved in alcohol, it's like a dominos situation."

He said that as program coordinator, he takes it as his job "to find that balance in their life. We can either be all mad at the water and our balance is off. We can be in drugs and alcohol, and our balance

is off."

"When the balance is on," he added, "then everything starts to work for you. Your education starts coming. You could be angry. You can't receive the education you need with that type of energy but if your life is in balance, it comes a lot easier. So, students that come in here in those situations, they can get that sort of help. What I really try to do is extend the families like they did in the old days."

"While attending school here at Lane," wrote Michele K. Fetterman affiliated with the Algonquin Tribe, "I have continued to celebrate my heritage... We need a place to carry on our traditions. The Longhouse would serve as a place for guidance for young people to learn from Tribal Elders many precious things such as heritage, stories and the history of their Tribe."

"The best thing I guess you need to know about when people like myself come into the colleges," said Merrill, "it's not just me. It's my whole family. My grandkids, great grandkids are here drumming, and when people see this, they want to have a family just like what they see here."

"Some," he said, "just come in and sit in my chair. They don't want to talk. They just sit for awhile and then leave. The place just feels like a place where I can feel the relief. Everything in my office I bless." ■

Community Recycle Center Is Not A Garbage Dump

■ "Sad" abuse of recycling area continues.

By Toby McClary and Ron Karten

Has the recycling center on McPherson Road become a dump site?

That is a question John Mercier has been asking a lot lately. Mercier, however, who is Director of Public Works for the Tribe, is determined to keep it open.

"We will still have to clean it up when people use it for refuse. It's a sad thing."

"We need to look at its short and long term future," Mercier added. "So far, the recycling center is safe even if it means we have to keep guys out there cleaning it up everyday," he said. Mercier wants to try to prevent sneaky dumpers instead of penalizing them. "I'm not ready to admit defeat (get rid of the whole thing) but the thought has crossed my mind."

The rubbish has become an eyesore for passers-by, particularly the homeowners at Grand Meadows across the street, who are concerned about keeping up the value of their homes. Unless dumpers take it on themselves to bring only recyclables to the center, the problems may result in video surveillance, fencing, or some other attempt at prevention.

Mercier acknowledged, however, that Tribal efforts at catching garbage dump-



Photo by Brent Merrill

Looking For A Solution — The community recycle center located at the corner of Grand Ronde Road and McPherson Road has been abused by some locals who have insisted on using it for a garbage dump instead of its intended purpose. This person intended to dump an unwanted mattress on the site, but picked it up again when informed that the area was not intended for dumping unwanted items. Tribal Public Works Director John Mercier said he wishes people would treat the land as sacred and doesn't want to penalize people, just educate them. Mercier said he wants to appeal to people to use the site properly and view it as a privilege before security measures are taken. Among the proposed security measures are video surveillance and fencing.

Tribal land deserves.

There was no budget in 2003 for the recycling center but in 2004 there will be funds for low-cost prevention measures to keep it being used as a recycling center. This could mean signs or surveillance of one kind or another.

Help us make this work because the recycling center benefits us all.

ers are not likely to succeed, and hoped that through community support and neighborly concern, dumpers will be convinced to find appropriate places to dump their garbage. In fact, Mercier said, he would be happy to talk to anyone who has dumped their garbage at the recycling center, to find alternatives or solve existing garbage disposal problems. Feel free to contact him with your name or anonymously, with ideas or concerns at 503-879-2400, or by mail to John Mercier, Public Works Director at the Tribe.

Tribal members know how sacred the land is. For others in the community, a look at the Veteran's Memorial will give you an idea of how to treat sacred land. You do not see trash bags, beds, or couches strung out all over it. Mercier said that the respect we see given to the memorial is the respect that all