

Touring The Forests Of Our Ancestors

FOREST TOUR
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"You find it all over, some dating back 2,000 years and more."

Information like this helps him determine the "broad band of settlements" Natives established in the area.

Each story filled in a little more of the lost or forgotten history of Willamette Valley Indians, layering what was once an oral Native history with the white bureaucracy's reclamation of that same history, this time for print. Talk went to future collaborations between the Tribe and the feds for building interpretive sites here and there along the old ways, amicably and one might say, finally, merging white and Tribal histories.

"It's always interesting to see these sites," said Tribal Vice Chairman Reyn Leno. "I never get tired of hearing about them."

But all the sites and all the stories were not to be this trip. A visit to the obsidian cliffs was knocked off the schedule because rain made it too uncomfortable and possibly too dangerous to visit.

"I had specifically wanted to go to see the obsidian cliffs," said Tribal Council Secretary June Sell-Sherer. She also expressed interest in a recent cultural dig site, the so-called Yellowjacket cultural site — that also was knocked off the

And so it was that late in August, a few miles down the road from the McKenzie River Ranger Station, Ranger Mary Allison said that the Willamette National Forest staffers were dedicated to bringing the forest's Native history to life for Tribal Council members.

This was not the first time that the Forest Service has led a delegation of Tribal leaders into the forest, however, and will not likely be the last.

"We're hoping to set up another tour to see some of the old campsites and the obsidian rocks," said Leno. "We want to focus on the actual sites."

Archeologist Bergland identified sites in the forest as trails and camp grounds used for centuries by Indians crossing back and forth over the Cascades.

"Virtually every place there is water, we've found tools, chips," he said.

During a recent fire near the Santiam Pass, Bergland watched an obsidian artifact fall as the fire burned. The artifact was buried as the fire continued burning and debris covered it over. For an anthropologist, this was "a real eye-opener," he said, because it was a demonstration of how artifacts move in the face of cataclysmic events.

Along with a broad band of settlements across the area, said Bergland, forest investigators have



Photo by Reyn Leno

The Sights And Sounds Of The McKenzie River — Here's a look at the 120-foot Sahalie Falls, the highest of the falls in this section of the McKenzie River.

the 120-foot Sahalie Falls and the 90-foot Kooshah Falls.

The two-day tour of historic sites brought together a series of history detectives, like Bergland and Jim Denny, an artist in real life who as an employee of the Forest Service takes detailed and dedicated care of rehabilitating and maintaining the forest buildings that have survived.

Denny took the group into a

cupied in summer by the Stock Packer for the area. He discussed his effort to use western red cedar for the roof in an attempt to match the original construction. Old growth originally used for the shingles, he said, had to be replaced with shingles cut from young trees available today.

When the Tribal delegation — including the three Tribal Council members along with Natural Resources Manager and Tribal member Pete Wakeland — arrived at Fish Lake, the water was gone.

It starts drying up around July 4, said Allison, and the fish head upstream to Hackleman Creek.

"An interpretive spot on the by-way," is how Bergland described it.

Also on hand for the tour was Mei Lin Lantz, Assistant Fire Management Officer in Fuels, a hot shot firefighter who now finds herself in the opposite roll of fire starter for the McKenzie River Station.

"We want to reintroduce fire into the eco-system," she said.

Leno's family has been camping at Clear Lake for years, and a few years ago, he had taken a similar tour, so some of the sites were not new to him, though stories of the old buildings were new, and the camas meadow was new to everyone, since it had just been rediscovered.

The two-day tour started with a quirky kind of observation: the cabins at the historic

Log Cabin Inn at McKenzie Bridge, where Tribal Council members stayed the first night, were without radio or television. Among a group looking to the forests for its history and culture, the talk the next morning was about how much we missed the culture that has replaced it.

Before mass media, everybody went to bed early. In McKenzie Bridge late in August, history not only came alive but also for many of us, unexpectedly repeated itself.



Photo by Ron Kartern

We Listened, And Learned — Forest Service Archeologist Eric Bergland describes some of the features of Fish Lake in the forest. Ironically, Fish Lake dries up each year, starting around the Fourth of July, when the fish head upstream to Hackleman Creek.

schedule because of weather. "We need to know about these places as Tribal Council members. Just to know and to see the sites where they lived."

"I definitely want to go back and see the (obsidian cliffs)," said Tribal Council member Jack Giffen, Jr.

As part of a Tribal deal to manage federal forest land in the Willamette National Forest, the Tribe and Forest Service agreed, among many things, to "build on our relationship."

found trees from the old days "upwards of 800 years old."

He led a tour of the Fish Lake area and the Clear Lake picnic grounds for lunch; in the afternoon, the tour went Owl Creek Meadow, a newly discovered camas meadow, as well as last summer's Clark Fire.

"It makes you wonder, 'Was camas more widely distributed here?'" he said.

The group also took a short hike along the McKenzie River where it goes over a series of falls including

building that had been a dispatching center for forest fires. He spoke about the effort to straighten up the building — they used big old farm machines to hold steady the bulk of the structure while the inside walls were squared — and pointed to a 1932 forest map that had been found under the building and cleaned before being mounted on a wall where it might well have found itself when still a tool of the trade.

He also showed the refurbished Forest Supervisor's house, now oc-