

Willamette University Seeks Renewal Of Its Native Roots

RENEWAL continued
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the first to attend and the last to leave the Indian school in 1842, when the facility moved to its current location. Because disease had decimated the local Indian population, the school began to serve the settler community. Five generations later, Olson was back at the school, now the university, adding Tribal support to the 'Renewal.'

"I feel like I close the circle," she said.

"The Indian people were part of everything that happened in the valley," said Dolores Pigsley, Chair of the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians. "We didn't go away, lose our culture or language."

The quiet, cloudy afternoon in Salem turned into a sunset bright with reds and oranges as Pelton told the story of a sick, young Indian boy orphaned by disease and taken in by a missionary couple. The winter passed and the boy was nursed back to health, but when it was time for spring planting, he took off. This confirmed for the missionaries the prejudice that Indians had "a deficit of values," in Pelton's words.

What the missionary mind couldn't fathom, said Pelton, is that Indians had lived for millennia without farming because they believed and knew from experience that the Creator had left all that would be needed right on this earth for the taking, with only a visit to running waters for fish, or to mountains for berries.

It was also possible, said Olson later, that the boy just wanted to get back with his people.

"There was a deep and profound misunderstanding about what had

put the Indians in such a desperate state," said Pelton.

With the ceremony, the University officially opened the refurbished, fourth floor attic of Eaton Hall as an Indian art gallery. Previously, it was used as storage for Indian baskets that now are displayed in the Hallie Ford Museum at the university. In addition, Pelton announced a university commitment to fund a Native American lecture series featuring Indian leaders, scholars and artists.

Artist Lillian Pitt (Warm Springs, Wasco), whose bronze sculpture, "She Follows Her Dream," stood next to the speaker's podium, called the lecture series, "a major event."

In turn, event organizer Rebecca Dobkins, Associate Professor of Anthropology and Curator of Native American Art for the university, credited Pitt for introductions to the indigenous Maori people of New Zealand, who are yet another example of the university's outreach to indigenous peoples.

Maori weavers are scheduled to



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~Willamette University
President M. Lee Pelton

visit in the fall (9/23-12/23) with an art show at the Hallie Ford Museum of Art called "Toi (Arts) Maori: The Eternal Thread." The Siletz and Grand Ronde Tribes as well as Willamette University are planning to host the group.

The room warmed with a standing room only crowd of about 100 that included Tribal members from Grand Ronde, Siletz and at least half a dozen Tribes across the state and country.

Roberta (Bobbie) Conner (Umatilla), a graduate of



Featured Artists — Willamette University's "Ceremony for Renewal" was an opportunity for some of the most talented Native artists in the Northwest to gather. Pictured from left are artists: Lillian Pitt, Joe Feddersen and Rick Bartow.

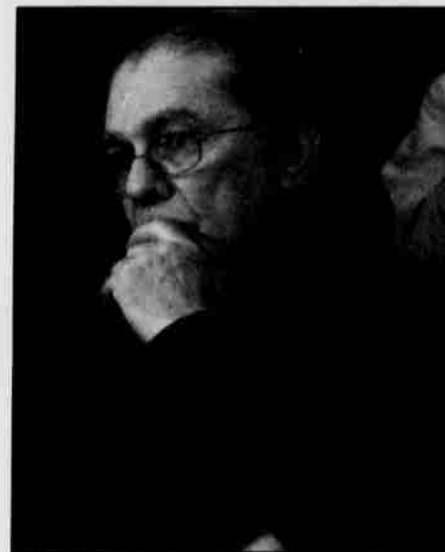
Willamette and now Director of the Tamastslikt Cultural Institute came from Pendleton for the one-hour ceremony.

Artists Pitt, Rick Bartow (Wiyot), Marie Watt (Seneca) and Joe Feddersen (Colville), all who have work in the new gallery, came in support.

"The more places that recognize the Native community the better," said Bartow. "It's very hard sometimes for Native artists to get recognized outside of their own communities."

In 1998, the Spirit Mountain Community Fund created a \$250,000 endowment at the Hallie Ford Museum of Art. The purpose of that endowment was to support all aspects of Native American art. "Among the many things that that endowment has allowed us to do is purchase the artwork in this gallery," said Dobkins.

Larry Byers, Don Bailey (Hupa) and Carol Cook from the Chemawa School, Janice Gould (Maidu), the



Director of Oregon State University's Native American Collaborative Institute Kurt Peters

Hallie Brown Ford Chair of Creative Writing at Willamette, Siletz Cultural Resources Director Robert Kentta and Siletz Cultural Resources Staffer Bud Lane also were there.

"You can feel the power," said Grand Ronde Tribal Elder and former Chair Kathryn Harrison, who stood in for Tribal member and Cultural Resources Language Specialist Bobby Mercier to offer the invocation for the event. Harrison has been working with the university for many years to improve relations between the school and the Tribes.

Members of the Willamette's Native American Enlightenment Association reported a pow-wow was scheduled for March 12.

To some in attendance, the missionary approach to Native Americans still exists as the underpinning of current American policy in Iraq. The U.S. President's State of the Union address the next day said that the invasion of Iraq was fostering "a higher standard of freedom" in the Middle East.

"This forced big brotherhood is just outrageous," said Lillian Pitt.

"The missionaries saw their efforts as altruistic," said Pelton. "History teaches us how disrespectful they must have seemed to Indians."



Generations Come Together — From Left: Helena Hoffman, Neeka Somday and Linda Lazo, members from the Native American Enlightenment Association at Willamette University, honor Tribal Elder Kathryn Harrison with a Pendleton blanket.