

# Tribal Members Feel The Power Of Tomanowos

■ Grand Ronde delegation makes annual journey to New York to be reunited with our sacred meteorite.



**Sacred** — Tribal Elder Pat Allen touches Tomanowos, a 15 and a half-ton meteorite housed in the American Museum of Natural History in New York City, on Wednesday, July 13. Several Tribal members visit the museum once a year to bless and cleanse Tomanowos which attracts millions of visitors each year.

Story and photos by Toby McClary

The American Museum of Natural History in New York City closed the doors at 4:30 p.m. on Wednesday, July 13, 2005 and was only open to members of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde.

This year's group included Tribal Elders Kathryn Harrison, Pat Allen, Betty Lambert, Patsy Pullin and Tribal members Bobby Mercier, Hope Lafferty, Ashley Bedortha, Denise Harvey, Alicia Selwyn and Tribal Council member Angie Blackwell.

The museum houses "Tomanowos," a 10,000 year-old, 15 and a half-ton meteorite that holds spiritual significance to the Grand Ronde Tribe.

"It holds a lot of power," said Tribal member and Language Specialist Bobby Mercier. "Who knows how many generations before us have touched it in the same spots that we have."

Tomanowos is the largest meteorite found in the United States. It was found near what is now known as West Linn,



**Two Worlds, One Place** — This photo was taken from the front steps of the National Museum of the American Indian in New York City. The Indian face was printed on a see-through banner and when the light is just right, the New York buildings can be seen in the background.

Oregon and was acquired by the museum in 1906. It is believed by scientists that billions of years ago, Tomanowos was the iron core of an early planet that was shattered in a collision during the epoch of planet formation.

In 2000, Tribal Council signed an agreement with the executives of the museum to allow Grand Ronde Tribal members access to cleanse, pray and bless Tomanowos once a year. Only Tribal access is allowed at this time.

Legend has it that centuries ago, ancestors of the Grand Ronde dipped their arrows in the pockets formed in the meteorite to ensure good luck during their hunt. Also, Warriors would rub the water, accumulated in the pockets, on their bodies for a sense of protection, feeling that the water was blessed.

During the ceremony, Tribal Elder and former Tribal Chairwoman Kathryn Harrison recalled when she was in a press confer-

ence several years ago and a reporter asked her if she thought that the meteorite still holds power in which she responded "it brought you here, didn't it?"

On Thursday, July 14, executives of the museum gave the Tribal members a guided tour of the museum. Tribal members Alicia Selwyn, Hope Lafferty and Ashley Bedortha presented the group with many facts and descriptions of numerous exhibits.

After the tour, the group was invited to a luncheon held in the Margaret Mead Hall of Pacific Peoples exhibit where everyone met, laughed and familiarized themselves with the many beliefs and meanings of the meteorite.

Tomanowos will remain in the Rose Center at the museum to educate the millions of people that visit each year. But, it will also remain in the hearts of the Tribal members that experience and feel the power that Tomanowos has to offer.



**Caretaker** — Tribal member and Tribal Language Specialist Bobby Mercier used his fan to blow off the dust that had accumulated on Tomanowos over the last year. Many Tribal members rubbed water and placed tobacco on the holes that have formed on the face of Tomanowos.