

## Grand Ronde Tribal Library Is Expanding, Will Soon Be At Capacity

■ The Tribal Library is growing in the size of its collection, the number of its programs and participation from the community.

By Ron Karten

Making paint out of rocks is one of the things you learn at the Tribal Library. In fact, there are a few selected paintings on paper attached to the wall above the check-out counter that were made as the result of a library outing planned to teach just this skill.

On another wall of the library are kachina dolls made more than 30 years ago by Southwestern Tribes. These were contributed — along with some 50-80 other items in 2002 by the David Marster family, collectors themselves who wanted to repatriate items that belonged with Indians.

Tribal member Willie Mercier started the library's video collection when he began buying DVDs to replace his videos. He donated more than 100 of the videos to the library's 400-plus collection.

"It felt right to donate these to the Tribe for other Tribal members," said Willie. "I felt that it was going to a more worthy cause than if I had just dropped them off with Goodwill or the Salvation Army."

Another regular donor to the library is Tribal Council member and former Librarian himself, Chris Mercier, who "donated most of the literature in the library," according to current Librarian and former Education Division Manager, Marion Mercier. He also contributed many of the classic videos in the library's collection, and all but two of the library's small (but growing) DVD collection.

"I would like to see the Tribal library become the community library," said Chris Mercier. "Some books I'll probably always keep (at home) but I'd rather have most of the books in circulation than have them on my shelves for my next tea party."

Ronnie Peterson, a bookstore owner in Vancouver, Washington, who grew up in Grand Ronde and played ball with Tribal Elder Chips Tom, read about the library in *Smoke Signals*, and started contributing duplicate books from his store to the Tribe.

Tribal member Pam Warren also contributed quite a few books and her children donated all of their Walt Disney movies — "a really cool contribution to the library," said Marion Mercier.

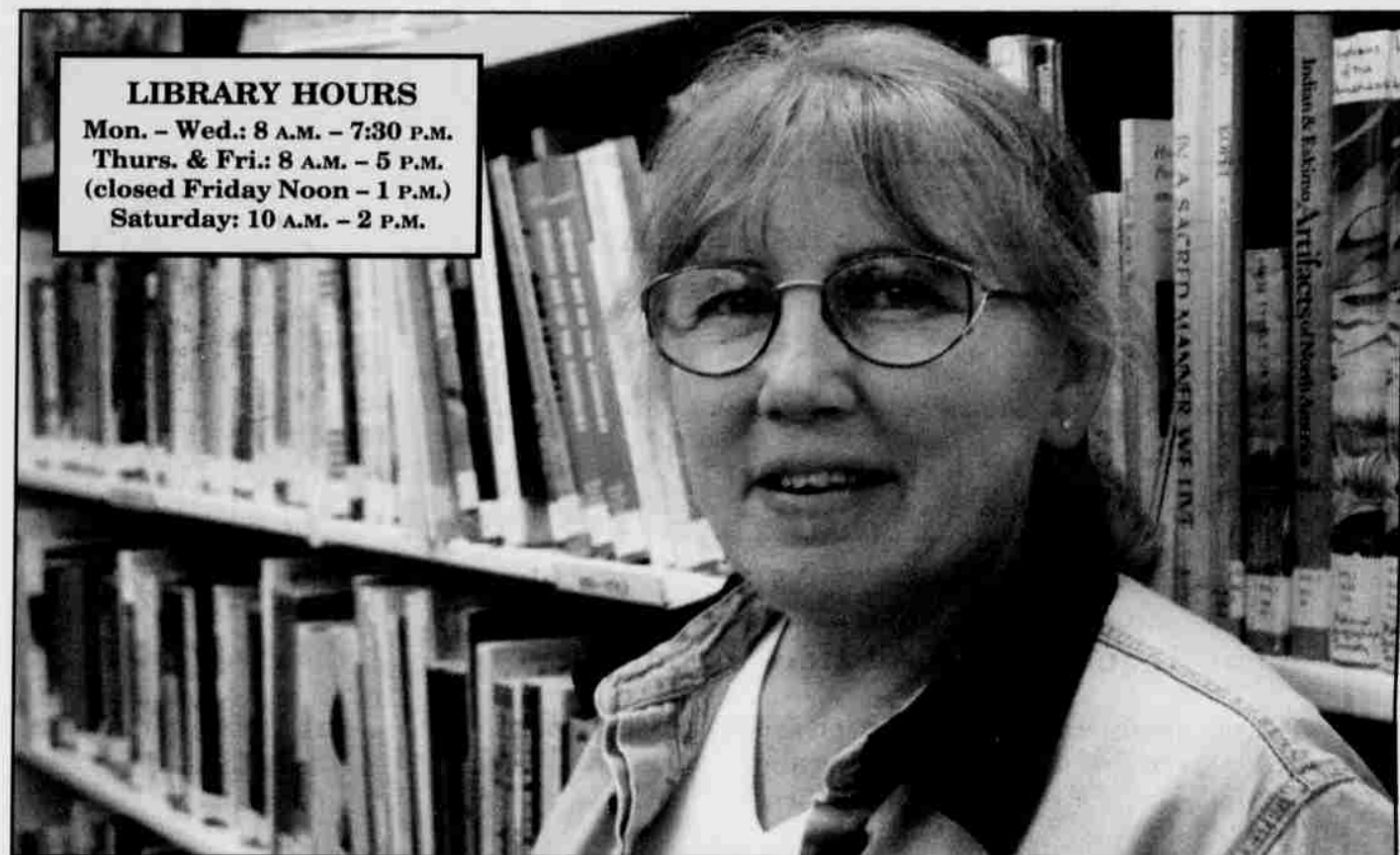
And for those interested in Tribal publications, the library receives newspapers from all but two Oregon Tribes, the Burns-Paiute and the Cow Creeks. And the Tribal Public Information office passes along 11 other Tribal papers from across the country, though they are not yet well read by library patrons.

"A few people will look at them," said Mercier.

Morrie (Klamath) and Lois Jiminez donate six magazines monthly to the library, including *Audubon*, *Consumer Reports*, *Readers' Digest*, *AARP* and *National Wildlife*. Morrie has been involved in Indian education for more than 30 years, and Lois has long been involved in library work, according to Mercier.

"That's major to the library," she said.

And, said Mercier, "There are



Tribal member & Tribal Librarian Marion Mercier

### LIBRARY HOURS

Mon. - Wed.: 8 A.M. - 7:30 P.M.  
Thurs. & Fri.: 8 A.M. - 5 P.M.  
(closed Friday Noon - 1 P.M.)  
Saturday: 10 A.M. - 2 P.M.

quite a few that give a handful of books or movies quite often."

Between gifts and grants earmarked for new books (and grants last year enabled the library to make three purchases of 50-150 books each time), Mercier said that the library shelves are likely to be filled to capacity in the next year, which is a great success looked at one way but a troubling merchandising picture, looked at another.

*Mercier sponsored a Summer Reading Incentive Program. Every time a student finished a book, they got a prize, said Mercier. And that prize, often enough, was another book. Participants read 40 books during the program.*

"It's important to show the cover of a book to kids," said Mercier. "It's the pictures and color and illustrations that make them want to pick that book up.

"Even for young adults," she continued, "there's been more circulation since showing the faces of the books on the top shelves. Having exhibits has helped, too."

The library hosted 50 visitors for the Native Authors exhibit last year. "Many had no idea that we had these books," she said.

Putting off for a moment the inevitable crunch that will come when the library shelves are full, the growth in library usage in the last year has been incredible. In 2004, said Mercier, 884 items were circulated through the community. Last year, 3,025 were circulated.

One of the drivers of library usage is the internet connection available to the public on library computers. The library staff has benefited by participating in State-funded library training, according to Mercier, while at the same time, the library has been connected to the State Library's EBSCO database research system. And this month, the Oregon State Library will provide each of the Tribal libraries in

Oregon with a complete new computer system for patron use. The money for these computers comes from the Gates Foundation.

New programs have played a big part in the library's growing success. In addition to last year's Native Author's presentation, Mercier sponsored a Summer Reading Incentive Program. Every time a student finished a book, they got a prize, said Mercier. And that prize, often enough,

mersion classes. Kindergartners get a story and also learn how to check books in and out.

"They stand with me behind the counter," said Mercier, "and see how their books come up on the computer screen."

Tribal historian and Grand Ronde Elder June Olson presented at the library and so did Western Oregon University Professor of English/Writing/Linguistics, Curtis Yehnert, who also is a Native storyteller.

The library also has purchased cassette players with headphones so that book groups can all listen to the same story on tape before discussion opens.

"I just want them to get interested in a book club," said Mercier. "We'll get there."

At the same time, Mercier was busy last year working with Tribal lobbyist Justin Martin to get House Bill 2674 passed in the state legislature in 2004. The law included Tribal libraries among the rest of the libraries in the state, allowing them to participate in inter-library loans and making them eligible for state grants.

The Tribal library also has been receiving funding from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) since the early 1990s, said Mercier. IMLS offers non-competitive grants for Tribes, and made grants to the Tribal library three times in the 1990s. Later in the 1990s, it funded a part-time staffer for the library, and in 2003-05, it provided the Tribal library with a grant for more new staff to help start some of the programming mentioned above.

Beginning this month, however, the Tribe will become the primary funder of the library. This will help maintain continuity whatever happens with grants and gifts that sustained the library in its early years, according to Mercier.

"Down the road," said Mercier, "the hope is that we have a separate facility for the library. As grand as this is, this shouldn't be the end." ■