

Explaining The Mystery Of Our History



Grand Ronde Tribal member David Lewis

Photos by Toby McClary

■ Tribal member David Lewis helps uncover and distribute hundreds of thousands of pages of Northwest Indian history so that new histories will come from the Tribal viewpoint.

By Ron Karten

An Indian, Peter Petit (an old spelling) of the Grand Ronde Tribe, had lost his leg in the 1880s. A series of letters described how an Indian Agent at Grand Ronde, tried to get a prosthesis made for him and that they were successful in the effort.

Another set of correspondence dealt with a petition. The first letter appeared to be a petition from Indians of Grand Ronde seeking to end their status as Indians and sell all their land. The letter said they wanted to be treated fairly.

A month later, the correspondence shows that the letter was a fake. The names falsely put on the petition were a creation of a real estate attorney from Dallas, Oregon.

These are some of the gems to come out of the work of Tribal member David Lewis through the Southwest

Oregon Research Project (SWORP). Today, he is in his final year of his University of Oregon Ph.D. program and is also



Manager and Director of SWORP.

Since 1995, Lewis has been back to Washington, D.C. twice to comb through Indian archives and bring the fruits of his search back home. His work has drawn financial sup-

port from many quarters, most recently, \$20,000 from the Coquille Community Fund.

"The purpose (of the grant) is to go

"We're looking at others for the future," he said. "We intend to look through American Philosophical Society in Philadelphia, and we'd like to go

through the Bancroft Library at Berkeley, and the University of Washington (state) Library, mainly because all of those libraries have the most extensive collections that deal with Oregon Indians."

The "we" refers to scholars from the

Coquille, Siletz and Grand Ronde Tribes, who have participated in SWORP, started in 1998 by George Wasson, a Tribal Elder of the Co-

"The Tribes can recover language and culture. They can do their own research into what occurred between the United States and the Tribes, (into) what conditions were like."

~ David Lewis, Tribal member

back to archival collections." Lewis has already searched Washington, D.C.'s National Anthropological Archives and the National Archives of the Smithsonian Institution to collect written pages relating to the Northwest Indian experience.

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Looking Wolf Headlines American Indian Week At Spirit Mountain Casino



Photos by Toby McClary



Hand Made — Tribal member Jan Michael Reibach played the Native flute as part of American Indian Week held at Spirit Mountain Casino on the week of May 15-20.