

# Goal is timelier, better cancer care

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doctors and, if necessary, assisting with other family needs.

Bottom line, the navigator helps patients receive timelier and better cancer care.

Henderson's new position is funded by a \$5 million National Cancer Institute grant to the Indian Health Board for a trial cancer navigator program. It is part of the Northwest Tribal Epidemiology Center's five-year research program to find out if the navigator model – used successfully to improve cancer care in other underserved communities, such as African-American breast cancer patients in Harlem – can cut cancer deaths among Native populations.

In addition to the Grand Ronde Health and Wellness Center receiving funding for a cancer navigator, the Shoshone-Bannock Tribe in Idaho, the Siletz Tribe in western Oregon and the Yakama Tribe in eastern Washington are participating.

Currently, Native American cancer patients are more likely to be diagnosed in the later, more virulent stages of the disease and, consequently, have lower chances of survival than other racial or ethnic groups in the United States because of a lack of access to adequate cancer screenings and treatment.

Also affecting the Native American cancer death rate are funding limitations in Tribal health care systems, and cultural, social and geographic hurdles.

"There is an incredible need," Henderson said, citing the number of Grand Ronde Tribal member deaths attributed to cancer in recent months. "I felt sorrow for people who couldn't get help because the program was not yet in place."

The navigator program does not pay for medical appointments or medication. However, Henderson, through networking, can help Tribal cancer patients tap into funding sources to pay medical bills or find support groups to help in the battle against the disease.

Currently, Henderson said he has a list of 15 Tribal members who are in varying degrees of battling cancer, from remission to receiving treatment.

Henderson said he has contacted 17 organizations from Salem to McMinnville to Portland that provide financial and emotional resources

to cancer patients. In addition to finding financial support for cancer patients, one of Henderson's goals is to start a Grand Ronde cancer support group to provide the emotional bolstering patients also need.

"There is nothing local," he said. "Not even in McMinnville."

Among his many goals, Henderson said outreach and education are priorities because increased

awareness about cancer screenings can help lower the death rate among Native Americans. As with any disease, the earlier cancer is detected, the

better the chance a patient will survive.

"Screenings are the first line of defense against cancer," Henderson said. "I want to increase awareness about when and where screenings are offered."

He said Oregon Health and Science University in Portland will be offering free screenings for breast and cervical cancer on Saturday, March 1. There will be no fees. For more information, Tribal members

can call 503-418-4500.

Lung, colorectal and breast cancers are the top three that affect Native Americans.

Henderson receives his clients through a physician referral. When a patient is diagnosed with cancer, he or she is given Henderson's information.

Patients, however, still decide how much, if any, of their cancer journey they want to share with a navigator.

"I try to help people stay headstrong, in high spirits, and I tell them this can be a life-changing event, not a life-ending one," Henderson said. "The gratification that I get from this job is in helping people."

As part of the program, Henderson will collect data that will hopefully show that the navigator model is effective in reducing the cancer death rate among Native Americans. Those numbers, in turn, could affect future Congressional funding for Native health care.

Tribal members, spouses or other Native American Tribal members who would like to contact Henderson can reach him at [jasen.henderson@grandronde.org](mailto:jasen.henderson@grandronde.org) or by calling 503-879-1395.

The cancer navigator service is available to all Grand Ronde Tribal members, no matter where they live, Henderson added. ■

*"I try to help people stay headstrong, in high spirits, and I tell them this can be a life-changing event, not a life-ending one."*

~ Jasen Henderson,  
Tribal cancer navigator

# Fort Yamhill site already selected

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through a competitive proposal process in 2005.

Jones & Jones is one of the premiere native architectural firms in the country, having worked on the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of the American Indian, the University of Oregon's Many Nations Longhouse and Evergreen State College's Longhouse.

As a part of a two-year grant award in 2005, the Tribe, with Jones & Jones, reviewed four potential sites owned by the Tribe for the future location of the museum and cultural center.

With Tribal community input, the property adjacent to the Fort Yamhill State Heritage Area was selected as the best site and was reflected in a resolution passed by Tribal Council.

A forested knoll divides the chosen location of the museum grounds on the south side from the new Grand Ronde pow-wow grounds located on the north side of the knoll. The museum will have a view of Spirit Mountain and a wetland meadow in the foreground.

The 2005 project also set aside space for two additional phases of development; one building for cultural education programming and another for Cultural Resources Department offices and curatorial space in anticipation of the need for the department's future expansion.

A series of community meetings



Photo courtesy of the Cultural Resources Department

Baskets in the current Grand Ronde collection

was advertised and held to review site and building options. Community attendees, Tribal staff, Culture Committee members, Tribal Council and the architects each selected the Fort Yamhill site and the three-building concept for long-term development.

In 2007, the Tribal Council supported, through funding a contract with Jones & Jones, preparation of a business plan for the museum and a detailed economic feasibility analysis.

In the 2008 phase of the project, the Tribe will prepare the schematic design of the development, alternative site layouts, floor plans and building elevations with a focus

on the museum building, the common parking area, and utilities and their relationship to the site.

The museum is the only building planned for initial development. The museum project alone will likely require a large capital campaign for the planned 20,000-square-foot building.

The project team will prepare museum concepts by researching similar sites constructed by the Squaxin Island, Warm Springs and Umatilla Tribes, and even some local non-Tribal museums in an effort to prepare a strategy that will be presented to the Tribal Council for its approval.

It is anticipated that the schemat-

ic design coming from the new grant will be used in efforts to help raise non-Tribal funds for the project. The project team will present various funding possibilities and building characteristics to Tribal Council for approval as the project develops.

The Grand Ronde Cultural Resources Department will be holding museum project community meetings again during 2008, where informational material and presentations will be provided and feedback solicited.

In addition to the museum work being done as part of the Administration for Native Americans grant, the Cultural Collections Program has developed the Ntsayka Ikanum virtual gallery ([www.grandronde.org/culture/ikanum](http://www.grandronde.org/culture/ikanum)) to share collection objects and historic information.

Program employees are currently cleaning the entire collection and moving it to a more spacious and regulated storage area, and will be bringing back hundreds of items from the Horner Collection in the coming months.

Cultural Resources Manager David Lewis and Tribal Engineer Eric Scott are co-leads on the museum project. They are working with longtime museum project coordinator Lindy Trolan, who is collections coordinator for the Cultural Resources Department, as well as Cultural Resources Department staff, Tribal staff, Tribal Council, Elders, youth and community members. ■