

Tribal Culture Committee briefed on statewide efforts to collect stories, history

By Dean Rhodes

Smoke Signals editor

The Tribe's Culture Committee received briefings on April 14 about two statewide efforts to celebrate Oregon's 150th birthday in February 2009 and to compile its history on an Internet Web site.

What both efforts have in common, said Culture Committee Vice Chairman and Tribal Elder Bob Tom, is the need for Oregon Tribes and Tribal members to participate.

"Unless we contribute, it is going to be a very white celebration and a very white encyclopedia," Tom said.

Tom was referring to, firstly, the Oregon 150 effort to celebrate statehood's sesquicentennial anniversary on Feb. 14, 2009.

Aili Schreiner, Oregon 150 project manager, and Wallace Carson Jr., a retired Oregon Supreme Court judge and Oregon 150 board member, discussed the effort.

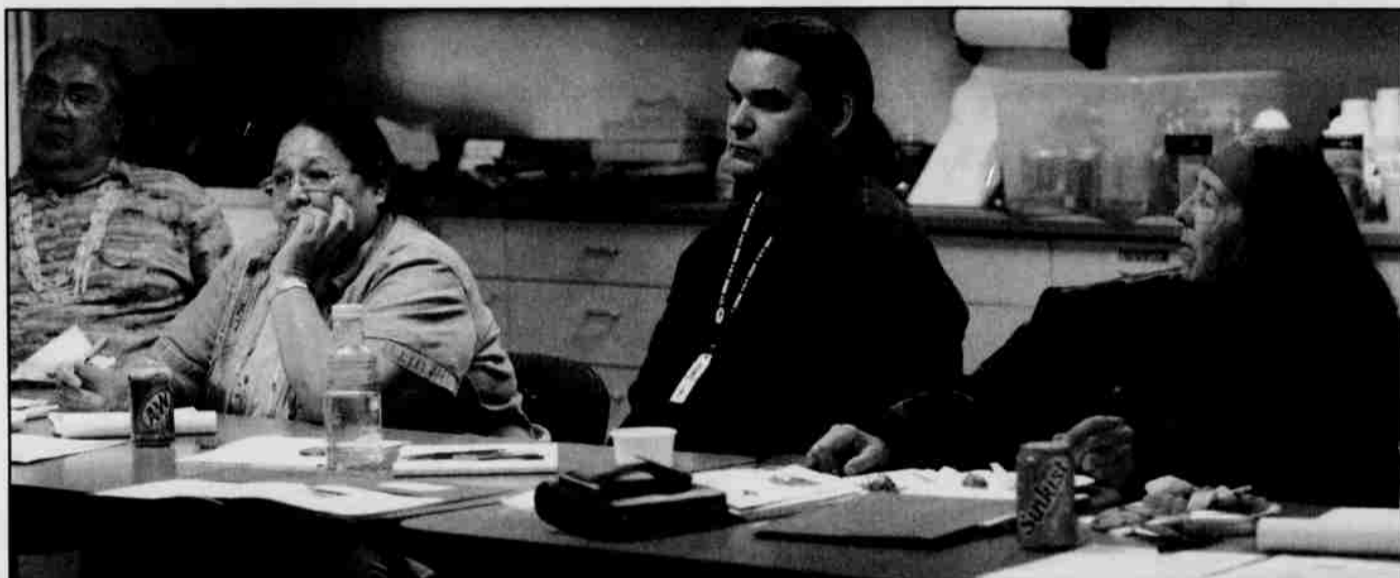
Schreiner keyed in on the Oregon Stories Project, which encourages state residents to write autobiographies about what being an Oregonian means to them.

"We want to see stories coming from every culture and every corner of Oregon," Schreiner said, as she showed off the effort's Web site, www.oregon150.org.

"No one knows Oregon — your county, your town, your Tribe, your jobs and your family — as well as you and your neighbors do," Oregon Story Project materials say.

Schreiner said people, so far, have been most inspired to submit family histories.

She suggested Grand Ronde Tribal members submit stories about a variety of topics, from education, history and heritage, work, culture and community, service, songs, and



Photos by Michelle Alaimo

Culture Committee members, from left, Vice Chairman and Tribal Elder Bob Tom, Culture Committee Chair and Tribal Elder Pat Allen, Tribal Cultural Resources Manager David Lewis and committee member and Tribal Elder Carol Logan attend a meeting with Oregon 150 and Oregon Encyclopedia representatives on Monday, April 14.

people and places.

Schreiner said the Web site in the near future will possess the ability to upload submissions. People also will be able to submit photos and sound files with their written entries.

"It's a wonderful opportunity for individuals to tell stories of their families, Tribes or Bands," Tom said.

Schreiner said Oregon 150 will collect personal stories through October 2009 and selected stories will be aired on radio stations throughout the state. The stories will then be sent to the Oregon State Archives.

The Grand Ronde Tribe, as part of the Oregon 150 effort, also is working in conjunction with the four other Western Oregon Tribes to create a video telling the stories of the Tribes from time immemorial to present time.

The other project, The Oregon En-

cyclopedia, is more historical.

Bill Lang, a member of the Portland State University History Department and one of two editors-in-chief of the Encyclopedia, said the goal is to create an online encyclopedia of history and culture of Oregon that is significant, authoritative, accessible and concise.

He said the process is just starting and the Web site, www.oregonencyclopedia.org, is adding new entries weekly. The goal is to have 2,500 to 3,000 entries by September 2009 and eventually publish a book in 2010.

Selections will range from 200-, 400-, 750- and 1,000-word entries, and longer essays for larger topics, such as Native American trading networks.

The Web site already features an entry on Chinook Jargon written by Henry Zenk, a consulting linguist

with the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde.

Lang said Oregon's Tribes play an important role in the collection process because current histories leave out many sources, including those of Native and minority communities, rural areas and women.

"You'd be shocked at the areas that are covered poorly or not at all in current textbooks," Lang said. "For some, the history of Oregon is the Oregon Trail, World War II and the Trailblazers."

"We're outreaching, taking the effort to communities. ... An entry about a Native community should be written by a Native member."

Tom said Tribal resources can be a "great contributor" to the Oregon Encyclopedia effort by providing information from a different perspective.

Tribal Cultural Resources Manager David Lewis, who sits on the 23-member Oregon Encyclopedia board of directors, said the board agreed to accept multiple perspectives on historic events, such as the arrival of European settlers in Native lands.

Lang said Portland State is committed to 10 years of support in compiling the Oregon Encyclopedia.

"I don't see the Oregon Encyclopedia dying," Lang said. "I do see it going through periodic revisions."

Linda Tamura, also an editor-in-chief of the Oregon Encyclopedia effort and staff member at Willamette University, spoke about the education side of the effort, from making it available for use by grade school children to creating curriculum materials for use by teachers.

Tom suggested the Grand Ronde Tribe, as it prepares to celebrate its 25th anniversary of Restoration, collect its Tribal history and submit some of that information to the Oregon Encyclopedia for an entry.

That way, he said, it will guarantee the state's history isn't just a whitewash.

Also attending the meeting were Culture Committee Chair Pat Allen and committee members Carol Logan and Linda Brandon, and Cultural Resources Department employees Eirik Thorsgard, Tony Johnson, Bobbie Mercier and Angella McCallister. ■

Oregon's Tribes - Stewards of Oregon's Stories

Stories about Work:

- work and Natural Resource Management
- work and traditional land practices
- work and Restoration efforts

Stories about Culture and Community:

- preserving and using Chinuk Wawa traditional crafts
- games, hunting, and fishing stories
- Pow Wow stories
- Round Dance stories
- Rodeo stories

OR 150

Representatives from Oregon 150 show a slide on Monday, April 14, during a meeting with the Tribe's Culture Committee, showing some ideas of how the Tribe could participate in the Oregon 150 effort to celebrate the state's 150th birthday in February 2009.