

Chankal is home to some 100 oblong stones

CHANKAL continued
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mette Valley also are visible from the peak.

More importantly, this place is home to some 100 oblong stones today recognized as phallic representations used in fertility rites. The Kalapuya word "chankal" refers to a place with phallic-shaped stones.

About 65 have been pulled from the ground, labeled and stored in Tribal collections. Tribal member and Cultural Resources Protection Coordinator Eirik Thorsgard, the Tribal staffer managing the project, showed the rocks to those in attendance.

"I don't know how touching the artifacts will affect you," he said. "I've been touching them, and all I can say is my wife's pregnant now."

The find has stirred great excitement among Tribal Council members.

"When the Cultural Resources Department came forward and asked us to buy this property," said Tribal Council member Kathleen Tom, "we did not hesitate. We didn't even ask the cost of the land. We made the decision in a heartbeat."

"The Tribal Council was overwhelmed," said Tribal Chairwoman Cheryle A. Kennedy. "Sacredness is what this land means to us, something that will go down in history."

Kennedy compared the Chankal site to Stonehenge in England.

"This is an opportunity to bring back some of our history," Tom said.

"This is going to be a special place," said Tribal Elder Peachie Hamm, who offered a blessing before the celebration. "I can feel it in my bones."

"We need to teach our children what it is to be one with Mother Earth."

"There are very few Tribes that can find a sacred place and buy it and then restore it," Thorsgard said. "This is a great opportunity to bring the place into Tribal ownership. We are the only Tribe in the United States that has done this."

"This is something just as big as Spirit Mountain, and we have gotten it back."

Despite many efforts to buy Spirit Mountain, the Tribe still does not own the property.

Still, Thorsgard said, the Chankal site is "a work in progress."

Tribal and community members cut back a riot of blackberry bushes and assorted fruit trees and grapevines and, in the process, saved and restored a mobile home on the property. It was less a cultural matter than a practical move to make the site usable and accommodating.

Volunteer and paid help will continue to prune the fruit trees and grapevines opening many possibilities to local Tribal members.

"We have several proposals for the property," said Thorsgard after the event, "from a satellite office for Salem Tribal members to a Tribal park to a sacred area used only in

certain times."

One idea would continue the place as a working farm and use the abundance of fruit to recreate the canning efforts that Tribal Elders remember from Great Depression and post-Depression days almost 80 years ago.

"One dream is to have an Elders' cookbook," said Tribal member and Cultural Resources secretary Angella McCallister.

Three community members — children of onetime farmer A.J. Doran, who lived on the property from 1929 to 1956 — attended with their spouses. Dorothy Evans, Phyllis Fehr and Maxine Fitzgerald had kept in touch with the farmland over the years, as it was subdivided

and sold, until a month or so ago when they ran into archaeologists working on the site.

"Something drew us out here again and again," Evans said, "and it snowballed from there. Our parents would have been very happy. That barn was my dad's pride and joy."

Byram Archaeological Consulting based in Stayton has been excavating the site for more than a year. They have scanned the whole property with ground penetrating radar and found only the 100 or so stones that mostly have been excavated and tagged. A few are left in the ground and marked to show how and where they were found.

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~ Tribal Cultural Resources Protection Coordinator Eirik Thorsgard

Tribal Chairwoman Cheryle A. Kennedy talks about what the Skyline property means to the Tribe during the Chankal Celebration on Saturday, Sept. 20, in Salem. Listening on the right is Tribal Cultural Resources Protection Coordinator and Tribal member Eirik Thorsgard.

Photos by Michelle Alaimo



Tribal Cultural Resources Director and Tribal member David Lewis, right, looks through old pictures with sisters Dorothy Evans, right, and Maxine Fitzgerald, middle, during the Chankal Celebration on Saturday, Sept. 20, in Salem. The women's parents owned the Skyline Road property from 1929-56.