

# Museum development continues evolving in phases

*Sept. 30 gathering seeks input from Tribal staff and members on facility*

By Dean Rhodes

*Smoke Signals editor*

The preliminary phase in a potentially years-long process of creating the Grand Ronde Museum and Cultural Center continued on Sept. 30 when about 30 Tribal staff and Tribal members attended an information gathering session in the Governance Center Atrium.

Representatives of Jones & Jones, the project architect, and Andre & Associates, a Victoria, Canada-based interpretation and design firm, briefed those in attendance on initial conceptual ideas for the facility, which would be located north of Fort Yamhill State Park and south the new Uyxat Powwow Grounds. A forested knoll separates the powwow grounds from the museum site.

At the outset, Tribal Director of Operations John Mercier cautioned that the museum/cultural center project is a "long work in progress."

Mercier said the Tribe will be faced with finding funding to complete the project, and that funding will depend on the lagging economy and community interest, among other factors.

So far, surveying, soils, geotechnical, wetland and archaeological studies for the museum/cultural center have been prepared. The preliminary draft schematic design includes collections storage, exhibit space, a small classroom, small craft/gift shop and a welcome hall/rotating gallery that connects the other spaces and can be used for visiting exhibits and cultural gatherings and events.

Michael Fiegenschuh, an architect for Seattle-based Jones & Jones, said the current conceptual idea is to keep the museum/cultural center to a "modest size" — about 20,000 square feet. The initial design respectfully nestles the building into the hillside with an upper level mezzanine area to welcome visitors and a downstairs area for gallery displays. Windows would look out to an impressive northern view of sacred Spirit Mountain.

"We are here to try and get more ideas," Fiegenschuh said. "More input, which will speak to what the Tribe wants. ... We're looking for ideas."

Andre & Associates President Bianca Message and Design Assistant Amy Willson then walked attendees through a possible interior layout of the museum/cultural center that would begin with a display telling the story of "Ikanum: The Beginning of When People Became People."

Willson said the entrance to the exhibit gallery could be a semi-circular area that is "welcoming, but mysterious." Stylized petroglyphs mixed with recorded animal sounds would invoke the feeling of a world before people. From there, museum visitors would



Photo by Michelle Alaimo

**Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde Grants Developer Bob McElderry looks over a site concept drawing of the proposed Grand Ronde Museum and Cultural Center with Tribal member and Tribal Librarian Marion Mercier during a Grand Ronde Museum Development Community Lunch Workshop on Tuesday, Sept. 30. The Tribe and its architectural firm were seeking input on the conceptual design of the project in the Governance Center Atrium.**

proceed to a sunken map showing the traditional lands of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, as well as the Tribes' trade routes.

Other display areas would continue telling the Grand Ronde Tribe's story, including pre-contact years, relocation to the Grand Ronde Reservation and the story of the Trail of Tears of the Rogue River Tribes and Bands, Termination of the reservation in 1954 and the Tribe's Restoration in 1983.

Message said that three different display scenarios were created in 2007 and, with Tribal community input, the fourth scenario, which was presented Sept. 30, was designed.

"This is all conceptual," Message said. "We are still coming up with different ideas."

Message offered other ideas, such as establishing a blog on which to collect Tribal members' stories to be included in the eventual exhibit and having a venue within the museum to show films created by Tribal youth about their culture.

After the meeting, attendees were asked to fill out comment cards with their suggestions on possible alterations to the conceptual plan. Twenty-five cards were collected by museum project coordinator Lindy Trolan, who is collections coordinator for the Cultural Resources Department.

Tribal Council members Cheryle A. Kennedy and Val Sheker were

briefed on the conceptual design following the public meeting.

Tribal Planning and Grants Manager Kim Rogers said that a fundraising campaign is tentatively planned to start in 2009 with 80 percent of the funding to be obtained from foundations and other outside sources. The Tribe would not complete the museum final design until it has the funds to build. Construction is tentatively slated for 2011, depending on the economy and fundraising success.

The Tribe is currently in the process of creating an architectural schematic design for the planned museum and cultural center. The process is primarily funded by a two-year, \$371,952 grant from the Administration for Native Americans.

Tribal matching funds include \$52,000 for architectural costs and the Tribe provides staff time to work on the effort. The grant project also includes documenting items in the Tribe's current collection and some added funds for cultural classes.

Rogers said the second year of the grant project will complete the schematic design, perform more interpretive design work and complete a traveling exhibit. Projected completion for those items is March. Additional Tribal community meetings are planned in 2009.

"Once the current project's schematic architectural design and in-

terpretive drawings are completed and approved by Tribal Council, they will be used in the upcoming fundraising effort," Rogers said.

As part of the site plan, land adjacent to the museum is planned for future buildings, including additional collections space west of the museum and an auditorium east of the museum. The entrance road and parking areas would be on the south of the facilities near Fort Yamhill State Park with special attention to elder parking space. Additional building is not expected to occur for several years after the museum is constructed and is not being designed in the current effort.

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

With Tribal community input, the property adjacent to Fort Yamhill State Park was selected as the best site and approved by Tribal Council resolution.

Mercier said the museum and cultural center, part of the Tribe's goal of re-establishing its culture, is complementary to the Tribe's efforts to restore its government and membership services after 1983's Restoration.

"This effort has been going on for many years," he said.

"There is a lot of planning still ahead of us," Fiegenschuh added. ■