

# Cultural Resources spearheads Tribal involvement in many Oregon 150 events

By Ron Karten

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Grand Ronde Tribal ancestors are among the earliest to create the history of this area that in 1849 became the state of Oregon.

Tribal cultural warriors are bringing back traditional lifeways in Native communities. For Oregon's 150th birthday on Feb. 14, these same cultural warriors secured for Native history its proper place among the many stories of European-American history.

The latest sesquicentennial (150th anniversary) projects for the Grand Ronde Cultural Resources Department include installations at Champoeg State Heritage Area in St. Paul, Mission Mill Museum in Salem and Lane County Historical Society Museum in Eugene.

At Champoeg Park, site of the unratified 1851 treaty negotiations between the federal government and western Oregon Tribes and bands, State Parks officials worked with Grand Ronde representatives to develop a long-lasting exhibit at the visitors' center.

The Grand Ronde Tribe was originally represented by Tribal member (she wasn't an Elder at the time) June Olson, former manager of the Cultural Resources Department, and Lindy Trolan, current Tribal Cultural Collections coordinator. The Tribe participated as a full partner in the planning and development phases, culminating in the 2005 Champoeg State Park Visitor Center interpretive plan. Once this was finalized, fundraising for the project, entitled "Facing Statehood," began.

The Friends of Historic Champoeg spearheaded the fundraising. Spirit Mountain Community Fund and the state of Oregon contributed to the project.

In the end, the Grand Ronde Cultural Resources Department made many contributions to the exhibit.

Among them are recordings from the Tribe's Chinuk Wawa immersion school classes.

The department also worked with Tribal members, including Tribal Elder Connie Graves, whose woven contributions to the exhibit include a juncus burden basket and tumpline, and cattail baby booties.

The department worked with Tribal member Kristi Petite's husband, Jessie Hall, who carves in the Native tradition, and included some of his carvings in the Champoeg installation.

In addition to collaborating on the exhibit text and imagery, the Tribe loaned the heritage area several artifacts from the Tribe's permanent collection.

The exhibit, which is anticipated to be a permanent installation, is "very specific to place and time," said Trolan. "It shows not only the original indigenous community, but the continuation of the Grand Ronde Tribe and traditions today."

Tribal Cultural Protection Coordinator and Tribal member Eirik Thorsgard will speak on May 16 during the Champoeg Spring Chautauqua Series. The title of his talk will be "Tribal History from Individual Tribes to the Grand Ronde Tribe."

On sale at the park are materials relating to the Grand Ronde Tribe. They include the Round Dance and Canoe Family CDs as well as "The Kalapuyans" book, highlighting one of the five major Tribes of the Grand Ronde Confederation.

As a result of Grand Ronde input, future efforts at Champoeg State Heritage Area will encourage more partnerships and events that bring Tribal members to the park. Last summer, the Grand Ronde and Chinook Canoe Family paddled the Willamette River, camping overnight at the park before ending



Photo courtesy of Mission Mill Museum

**The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde contributed to all phases of the Mission Mill Museum's Oregon 150 exhibit, "Facing Statehood," including development of the text and storyline and almost 50 items from the permanent collection. The exhibit focuses on the 25 years before statehood in 1849.**

their paddle near Willamette Falls. Dancing, feasting and protocol came once again to Champoeg.

"The Tribe played an important role in giving us background information, making sure our facts were accurate," said Bryan Nielsen, Champoeg State Heritage Area manager.

"The relationship between the Tribe and the early settlers in the valley, it's important that this relationship is told, not just what went on thousands of years ago, but when settlers got here. It is really important, and a lot of people are seeing that now. The project is an example of a better way of telling a story."

In Salem, the Tribe's Cultural Resources Department became involved in Mission Mill's Oregon 150 project last March. For the anticipated 18-month run of the exhibit, the Grand Ronde Tribe contributed almost 50 items from the permanent collection, including a powder horn and bag, ceremonial fish club, and bow and arrows that were recently returned to the Grand Ronde Tribe from Oregon State University's Horner Collection.

The Grand Ronde Tribe contributed to all phases of the exhibit, including development of the text and story line, Trolan said. The headings are in both English and

Chinuk Wawa and the exhibit focuses on the 25 years before statehood in 1849.

Also included in the exhibit is a kiosk with the hands-on, interactive Virtual Gallery that also appears on the Cultural Resources Department Web site at [www.grandronde.org/culture/ikanum](http://www.grandronde.org/culture/ikanum).

"We wouldn't have been able to achieve what we did with the exhibit without the help from the Grand Ronde Tribe," said Keni Sturgeon, curator of Mission Mill Museum.

For the Lane County Historical Society Museum, the doctoral dissertation of Cultural Resources Department Manager and Tribal member David Lewis will be on display. His work takes a fresh look at the Termination of the Grand Ronde Tribe.

The museum exhibit's focus is diversity in Lane County.

In addition, the Grand Ronde Cultural Resources Department has been involved in many smaller Oregon 150 efforts, including the development of the western Oregon Tribes' video shown at the Gathering of First Nations event in late January at the State Fairgrounds.

The Tribal Cultural Resources Department also participated in development of the Oregon Historical Society's traveling exhibit, currently at Salem Public Library. ■

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Chief Seattle, 1854

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