

# 'Streams of Language, Memory, and Lifeways' Conference draws 550

*Grand Ronde Tribe is a presence in Portland*

By Ron Karten

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A dozen or more Grand Ronde Tribal members and employees played parts in a recent 2009 conference focusing on Tribal archives, libraries and museums.

Called "Streams of Language, Memory, and Lifeways," this third conference on the subject was hosted by the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation and held in Portland on Oct. 20-22.

About 550 people from as far away as Alaska and New Zealand attended some 56 sessions plus after-hours events.

Canadian First Nations and universities had a large presence as did Tribes from the Pacific Northwest. Maoris from New Zealand presented their cultural perspective for collecting, storing and sharing information.

The Grand Ronde Canoe Family performed at an after-hours session at the Oregon Historical Society.

Tribal Elder Kathryn Harrison, an honored guest, delivered the invocation to open the conference. Junior Miss Grand Ronde, Tribal member Nakoosa Moreland, attended as Harrison's aide.

Tribal members David Lewis and Jennifer O'Neal each participated as presenters. Lewis is manager of the Tribe's Cultural Resources Department and O'Neal is head archivist at the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of the American Indian on the National Mall in Washington, D.C.

Tribal Elder Marion Mercier, the Grand Ronde Tribe's librarian, and Lewis served on the Conference Committee that planned the event.

Tribal member CeCe Kneeland made beadwork and Tribal member Greg Archuleta teamed with frequent cultural resources contributor Greg Robinson to make plates as gifts for awardees at the event.

In a presentation titled, "Through the Tribal Lens: Tribal and University Collaboration in Archival Collections," Lewis joined Umatilla's Tamástlikt Cultural Institute Director Roberta Conner and University of Oregon Special Collections & University Archives head James Fox.

Lewis described the "amazing collection of stuff" he and his team working on the Southwest Oregon Research Project uncovered during three successive trips to archives held in the nation's capital (1995-2006).

By copying and indexing some 150,000 documents, and getting this information out to Oregon Tribes, Lewis and the team "restored this ethnic information to the Tribes."

He called it a "reversal of the anthropology" practiced by Europeans. They collected this same



**David Lewis, Tribal member and manager of the Tribe's Cultural Resources Department, speaks during his "Through the Tribal Lens: Tribal and University Collaboration in Archival Collections" during the Tribal Archives, Libraries and Museums 2009 National Conference in Portland on Tuesday, Oct. 20.**

**Marion Mercier, Tribal Elder and the Tribe's librarian, removes a photo from a tub of water as she learns how to recover wet materials during the "Salvaging Collections: What to do When Collections Get Wet!" session of the Tribal Archives, Libraries and Museums 2009 National Conference in Portland on Tuesday, Oct. 20. Mercier served on the Conference Committee that planned the event.**

Photos by Michelle Alaimo

information and kept it virtually hidden from Tribes by storing it back in Washington, D.C. And then, bureaucratic hoops made it difficult or impossible for Native peoples to get access.

Fox said that the future of the university's archives is now on the Internet. The university archives, he said, is making as many documents as possible accessible via the computer.

Connor said not to overlook what are often the best sources of information — the people who file it and work with it.

"It is very important to have personal relationships at the universities," she said. "Some are retired, but if you contact them, they still will give you information that you may not be able to get anywhere else."

Tribal member Penny DeLoe, Tribal archivist, picked up information about how to deal with water-damaged documents.

Tribal member Stephanie Wood, a recent graduate in Anthropology at the University of Oregon, attended. She currently works in the Tribal Cultural Resources Department.

Wood said she was making a special effort at the conference to make new contacts, and was particularly interested in a section about preserving oral traditions.

O'Neal participated in a presentation discussing new principles drafted by the American Library Association for protecting cultural expressions like folklore, songs and dances.

O'Neal's mother, Tribal Elder Marta Clifford, also was on hand.

Clifford is currently earning a Cultural Resources Management certificate from South Puget Sound Community College.

Tribal members April Campbell, manager of the Tribe's Education Division, and Wendy Weston, a UO graduate in Museum Studies, attended. Lisa Watt, the Tribe's first library staffer, also attended.

Phil Cash Cash (Cayuse/Nez Perce) presented a cache of information providing new insights into Native sign language, as well as trade languages beyond Chinuk Wawa.

"The work being done out there in Indian Country is helping everyone," said Lewis. "Part of that is making resources in libraries available to others so they can do their own research."

"The eight awardees at the conference are representative of the best projects on-going out there now."

Information about presenters and presentations is available on the conference Web site at <http://tribalconference.org/> ■