

Library expansion ready for June 2 Open House

Project doubles size of Tribal facility to almost 3,000 square feet

By Ron Karten

Smoke Signals staff writer

The Tribal Library's expansion is complete and an Open House to see the improvements — new entryway, a fountain, restrooms and 1,500 square feet of new space — will coincide with the Education Division's Summer Kickoff barbecue at 5:30 p.m., Thursday, June 2, out behind Youth Education.

The celebration couldn't come soon enough for Tribal Elder and Librarian Marion Mercier.

"It's been a journey," she said.

Mercier has overseen the expansion that began in January, marshalling resources to give a proper welcome to new shelving and appropriate attention to fighting off computer crashes and software glitches. She also kept on top of design issues and out of the way of dust and the everyday comings and goings of electricians and builders. In between, she continued managing the library's daily operations.

For two weeks, she was without a library computer system. She checked items in and out the old-fashioned way; they were not like the good old days.

Now it is done and much was accomplished.

The 1,400-square-foot facility has more than doubled.

"We have space to expand the collection in all the different categories," said Mercier, taking a break from re-shelving books. Before the expansion, she said, "We had no wiggle room on our shelves." Today, she has enough room to use the bottom shelves for storage, if she wants.

"They were so cramped in there," she said of her little fish-sized readers, "like sardines. If everybody came in, it was packed. Now, we have enough room to be comfortable."

The Tribe's Information Systems Department chipped in a "bonus" wide-screen television that has been mounted on the wall inside the entrance. It will be used for showing movies, hooking up to a computer-driven slide show and providing group access to the Internet.

"I can't say enough for IS," said Mercier. "They were here from the beginning, to take things down, to store them. They were always right here whenever we needed them to be here."

In addition to the television, IS provided the library with new software to connect the library's database with such other functions as loaning books and DVDs and keeping track of the collection.

In fact, the project brought out the best in a number of departments.

"Joe Loomis (Limited Energy Telecommunications technician) and Jodie Kraemer (Telecommunications administrator), who keep the Tribal phone system going, had to work at night to get the wiring done," said Mercier.



Photo by Michelle Alaimo

Tribal Librarian Marion Mercier fills new shelving with books in the 1,500-square-foot expansion of the Tribal Library on Friday, May 20. An Open House of the Tribal Library will be held on Thursday, June 2.

"Thanks go to the Procurement Department, and especially Kevin Mueller, for all the help, planning and securing furniture and equipment moving and storage. A huge thanks to Larry Leith for his help in getting SMC furniture items for us to use at the library.

"Plus, those guys have a great sense of humor."

The Tribal Library has been on the radar of many people from its beginning in 1990 with the first of many grants given by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS).

"IMLS has been a most generous partner for the library," said Mercier, "and we attribute our successful beginning to this grant agency."

In December 2009, the Tribe received a \$325,000 Indian Community Development Block Grant to expand the library. It required \$108,000 in Tribal matching funds. In July 2010, Spirit Mountain Community Fund put up \$52,000 as part of the match and Tribal Council added another \$56,334.

More than half of the current collection of some 13,000 items has been contributed to the library. The expanded library will hold twice that many.

Tribal Council member Chris Mercier started the DVD movie collection with a gift of the first 15, Marion said. He was the first librarian and, more recently, he contributed an entire month's salary to the library.

"He's a reader," said Marion, "so the kind of things he donates are the kind of things the library needs."

"I read a quote somewhere that a

library tends to be a reflection of the community," said Chris Mercier. "Well-used and stocked libraries indicate a community that cares. I believe this. On top of that, reading is one of the most healthy things you can do for your brain."

Tribal Elder Terri Dilts, a member of the Tribal Education Committee and former elementary school teacher, donated some 500 elementary-level books that she used in her classroom.

The Marsters of the Dallas area "brought in probably 100 items for us to add to our Native American collection — books on plants and trees and mushrooms; and three Kachina dolls, collectors items that now add value to the library collection.

"They just lived in the area and read about the Tribe getting a library," Marion said.

Vancouver, Wash., bookstore owner Ronnie Pederson donates 50 to 100 books every year.

"He grew up in Grand Ronde," Marion said, "and used to play on a ball team with (former Tribal Elder) Russ Leno and (present Tribal Elder) Chip Tom."

And thanks also go to Tribal member Brian Glass for his generous contributions.

BnK was the general contractor for the project with John McDowell as the site manager. Ken Andrews, owner of Milstead Inc., was project manager. The architectural firm LGA designed the expansion with Les Godowski as lead architect on the project. Various sub-contractors worked on the project as well, Marion said.

"Several Tribal members worked as sub-contractors and laborers.

Joe and Rob Haller did an awesome job painting the library. Charles Gleason contracted the carpet and tile work, and both look fabulous. And Anthony Henry put in hours of hard work doing various jobs for the project.

"It's amazing how many people come in and say, 'I didn't know there was a library here' — still!" Marion said.

Reflecting on the things that make the job worth getting up for, said Marion, "Everybody who comes here wants to be here. They have a reason they're here. I love that!"

"And when you hear those kids reading in September, and then see how well they are reading in February, you just want to celebrate everything they have learned. It's an awesome thing to be part of, that individual's achievement."

Three second-graders came in to look at the finished library recently, Marion said. "One said, 'I wish I could live here now.' It was so sincere and precious."

This summer, the library will sponsor "One World Many Stories @ Your Library" and will hold two Saturday events; the first on June 25 from noon to 2 p.m. called, "Celebrations Around the World," and the second on July 16, also from noon to 2 p.m., called "Art Around the World."

Registration for the summer Reading Incentive Program ends June 17. The program, for youth ages 4-17, runs from June 13 to July 29, and enables young readers to earn Book Bucks for each book read. It takes 10 books to complete the program. Then, during the program's last week, readers can purchase prizes with their Book Bucks.

The library is open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday, but closed over the noon hour for lunch, and from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturdays. ■

"I read a quote somewhere that a library tends to be a reflection of the community. Well-used and stocked libraries indicate a community that cares. I believe this."

~Chris Mercier