

Reibach writes Grand Ronde modern-day Tribal 'anthem'

Tribal member gifts song for whatever uses it deems fit

By Dean Rhodes

Smoke Signals editor

The genesis of "We Are Grand Ronde" dates back to the mid-1990s when Tribal member Jan Michael Reibach had just moved to Grand Ronde — Bunnsville, to be exact — was living in poverty with only a guitar to his name and started working at Spirit Mountain Casino.

"Back then, we did not have much, but we were rich in family and culture because of our Tribe," Reibach posted recently on the Tribe's Facebook page. "This song is inspired from moving to the Reservation after suffering from two strokes. Since that time I have been blessed as a national recording artist with the resources to record and give this song to my Tribe."

Now well-known professionally in the Native American music world as Jan Michael Looking Wolf and a recipient of many major Native American Music Awards, Reibach resurrected "We Are Grand Ronde" and recorded it in a McMinnville studio with his usual producer Keith Sommers.

Tribal members Kenny Lewis and Marcella Norwest Selwyn also ap-

pear on the recording on guitar and vocals, respectively. Reibach paid for production expenses, which he prefers to keep confidential, and says that "nothing is owed or asked for."

Reibach gifted the song to the Grand Ronde Tribal Council on May 25, giving a letter to Tribal Attorney Rob Greene that transfers and relinquishes 100 percent ownership of the song to the Tribe.

"After traveling the nation as a performer and my music reaching foreign country radio charts, I realize more than ever that it is such an honor to be a member of this Tribe," Reibach said in his letter. "You all serve as my inspiration for the music and the lifeway."

"It's truly a blessing," said Tribal Chairwoman Cheryle A. Kennedy. "The talent that you have and that you choose to contribute to your people. You can feel the love that you have for all. I want to say thank



Jan Michael Reibach

"We Are Grand Ronde"

*Many years, through it all, our people have survived
By their courage, honor and faith, our Tribes are still alive*

*1856, Table Rock, they endured a Trail of Tears
The blessings of that sacred walk will go on for years
Here we are, standing strong, for future generations
All with one heart, one spirit and one drum*

*All you people
Of the Cedar and Mother Earth
All you people
Of the valleys, rivers and mountains,*

*We are Grand Ronde
Wey, hey, we are Grand Ronde*

*From children to Elders, together hand in hand
Like an eagle, we'll spread our wings
And soar across the sky*

*All you people
Of the Cedar and Mother Earth
All you people
Of the valleys, rivers and mountains,*

*We are Grand Ronde
Wey, hey, we are Grand Ronde
We are Grand Ronde*

you."

Kennedy said the Tribe will use it in many different ways, such as at gatherings, etc.

Tribal Council member Wink Soderberg said that the song "was so good" that he was going to save it for 40 years to play at his funeral.

The song can be heard and downloaded for free at www.lookingwolf.com.

com.

Reibach's presentation also can be watched on the Tribal Web site by clicking on the May 25 Tribal Council meeting video starting at about the three-minute mark.

"In continuation of support for our Tribe and wishing us all 'One Heart,'" Reibach said in concluding his letter. ■

Zenk first came to Grand Ronde in 1978

DICTIONARY continued from front page

Oregon Ph.D. awarded in 1984.

Zenk's thesis documented the Chinuk Wawa language thanks to his contact with the five Hudson sisters — Gertrude Mercier, Velma Mercier, Martha Mercier, Eula Petite and Ila Dowd — as well as other Tribal Elders including Clara Riggs, Wilson Bobb, Esther LaBonte, John Petite, Ethel Petite Logan, Nick Leno and Elmer Tom, all fluent in Chinuk Wawa.

Former Cultural Education Coordinator Tony Johnson (Chinook) initially brought Zenk in as a linguistic consultant. "Part of my job description," he said, "was to develop the dictionary. He has been working on it for the department since 1998."

Zenk first came to Grand Ronde in 1978. "I was looking for a photo of (former Tribal Elder John B.) 'Mose' Hudson for an article," he said.

The dictionary includes sections on the language's local speakers, the alphabet, a pronunciation guide and the grammar of Chinuk Wawa. In addition, following the words, definitions and etymologies (origins) of words, the dictionary includes a picture gallery and biographical sketches of the Tribe's fluent Chinuk Wawa speakers, texts from the Hudson and Wacheno families, from Clara Riggs and a letter from Esther LaBonte.

Field transcripts are included from recordings made by University of Washington anthropologist Melville Jacobs of John B. Hudson and Victoria Howard, both former Tribal Elders.

Two Catholic missionary texts

also are included since Catholic priests at Grand Ronde and elsewhere primarily used Chinuk Wawa to reach local Indians.

The book is dedicated to former Tribal Elder Jackie Mercier Whisler, a Chinuk Wawa teacher at the Tribe who contributed much to the dictionary before her passing in 2007.

There also are examples of lower Columbia Chinuk Wawa that come from beyond the Grand Ronde community included in the book. Sources for these examples include Catholic missionaries in the lower Columbia region, as well as materials from the Willapa Bay community in what is now southwestern Washington.

Though the language was originally used across a wide geographic area, "This is Chinuk Wawa as our Elders, meaning Grand Ronde Elders, teach us to speak it," said Zenk.

The dictionary is now in the final editing phase. Zenk's copy is festooned with hundreds of post-it notes bearing edits for nearly every page. Completion and publication are expected in the summer.

While the Tribe is funding the publication, the department is simultaneously working with a university press for distribution services, Zenk said.

"It is a hybrid language from different mother tongues," said Zenk. "It is uncertain how old the language actually is. There is a controversy among scholars. Some say that it arose as a response to the first foreign traders arriving in the late 18th century (starting in 1792). The first traders came by ship to the mouth of the Columbia River and traded for Indian furs.

"Other scholars believe that the

hybrid language is actually older and was used among different Tribes earlier in the aboriginal, or Native, trade."

Whatever the origins, it was already in widespread use in 1856 following the Trail of Tears when the Grand Ronde Tribe was formed.

"The most important part of the vocabulary is from the Native Chinookan languages of the lower Columbia River," Zenk said, "and they are who-knows-how-many-thousands-of-years old."

"It might be pointed out that the Chinookan pronunciations and word forms are faithfully preserved in Chinuk Wawa as it was spoken by Native people. White speakers tended to distort these original Native pronunciations. In our language program, we strive to remain true to original Native pronunciations."

At Grand Ronde, Chinuk Wawa was rapidly adopted by treaty-signing Tribes that spoke eight different Native languages.

"Fur traders, settlers, pioneers and French Canadian voyageurs all learned the language quickly, helping to make it a common language throughout the Northwest," said Tribal member David Lewis, who is also manager of the Cultural Resources Department.

Some early Tribal families, like the Petites, the Norwests, the LaBontes, the LaChances, the Vivettes



Henry Zenk

and the Pichettes were descended from French-speaking voyageurs (French Canadian and French-Indian fur company employees) who married local Indians.

The French Canadian speakers added their color to the language that grew with added usage then and continues to grow today as more people speak it.

"I think of this as an expression of the heritage of the Grand Ronde community," said Zenk.

"It's going to be a great resource for Tribal members wishing to understand and use the language," said Lewis.

About half of the words come from Chinookan languages spoken along the lower Columbia River, Zenk said. Of the other half, some 10 percent each come from English and French Canadian speakers, 5 percent are Nootka words from Vancouver Island in British Columbia and 5 percent are Salishan words. Some words come from still unidentified languages or language mixes.

Credit goes to Cultural Resources staffers past and present for contributions to the project, and to Elders who spoke the language and some who continue to speak the language. Formatting and design credits go to Sarah Braun Hamilton, a linguistics student at Portland State University, who got involved with Chinuk Wawa classes a few years ago.

Thirty to 35 adult learners have attended Tribal Chinuk Wawa classes and attained a "high-intermediate" skill in the language, said Zenk.

"I'm very grateful to the Tribe for having supported this," Zenk said. "I'll sure feel good about this when it's done." ■