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# Smoke Signals

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UMPQUA ■ MOLALLA ■ ROGUE RIVER ■ KALAPUYA ■ CHASTA

## PGE meets Tribal lamprey collectors at Willamette Falls

By Ron Karten

Smoke Signals staff writer

During this year's lamprey harvest at Willamette Falls, a Portland General Electric video crew interviewed Grand Ronde Tribal representatives for a short history of the Falls.

"All we can do is scratch the surface," said Jeff Gersh, owner of Portland-based NarrativeLab Communications and producer of the upcoming PGE video. "I'm 50 and I could spend the rest of my life on this project."

"One of the most historically rich places in the Pacific Northwest," in Gersh's words, the Falls also are a marvel of cultural, biological, geological and, of course, electrical history.

Following the long Native experience of collecting lamprey at the Falls, the area became "a laboratory for electric power generation," Gersh said. "When Westinghouse sent his turbines to the Falls (at the end of the 19th century), he didn't guarantee they would work. He didn't know. Obviously, they did work and Westinghouse had an ongoing business and electricity in this country was changed forever."

See LAMPREY  
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## Arrival in Swinomish



Grand Ronde Tribal member Tina Lara waves to the crowd as the Grand Ronde Canoe Family enters the Swinomish Channel on Landing Day of the "Paddle to Swinomish" Canoe Journey on Monday, July 25.

Tribal Elders Julie Duncan, left, and Claudia Leno take photos as the Grand Ronde Canoe Family arrives at Swadabs Park via the Swinomish Channel on Landing Day of the "Paddle to Swinomish" Canoe Journey on Monday, July 25.  
More photos on page 8.



Photos by Michelle Alaimo/Graphic by George Valdez



Photo by Ron Karten

Kelly Dirksen, Fish and Wildlife Coordinator for the Tribe (right), dumps a bag full of lamprey into an ice bucket as Tribal member and Cultural Protection Coordinator Eirik Thorsgard (left) and Tribal member and Youth Crew Supervisor Torey Wakeland (center) watch.

## Mercier was a one-of-a-kind Tribal leader

'They destroyed the mold when he was born'

By Ron Karten

Smoke Signals staff writer

Tribal member Joann Mercier remembers her uncle, Dean Mercier, as charming, and otherwise.

"Anyone who knew Dean Mercier, 'Running Bear,' knew with no doubt in their mind exactly where they stood with him (good or bad ... they knew).

"Maybe the most memorable event that sticks in my mind is when Aunt Velma (Hudson Mercier, Dean's mother) passed away."

Within a day or two, Sharon Palanuk Mercier (Dean's aunt, married to former Tribal Elder Hubert Mercier, Dean's uncle) passed away also.

"There was only a two-hour difference in the funeral services," said

Joann. "Sharon's was the first one, at the Nazarene Church, and Auntie's was the second at the Catholic Church.

"I don't personally know very many people who could or would attend two funerals in one day, especially when one of them was your own mother.

"Dean walked into Sharon's funeral that day with every bit of compassion and respect that he could muster up.

"I remember looking at him during the service, and wondering, 'How? How was he able to do this?'"

"Dean oftentimes danced to a different beat, and sang to a different tune. But no matter how he danced or sang, he did it because that was



Dean Mercier



just the way he was."

"I've got lots of memories," said Doug Colton Sr., Dean's son-in-law. "It's hard to put them into small words because they're huge memories. He'd do anything for anybody."

"Dean was a man who spoke his words," said Tribal Council Chairwoman Cheryl A. Kennedy, one of Dean's many relatives in the community. "I'd always tease him. I'd tell him, 'How are you?' and in all the years his answer never changed. 'Average,' he'd say."

Tribal Elder Ed Larsen remembers, "When he was quiet, you'd ask him, 'What's going on, Dean?' and he'd say, 'Just payin' attention.'"

See MERCIER  
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