

Permaculture classes coming to Tribe

Program will strive for indigenous sustainability

By Ron Karten

Smoke Signals staff writer

At the Aprovecho.net Web site, classes are offered in sustainability — food production, shelter, natural building techniques, forest gardening and home landscaping.

A tailor-made version of the classes is coming to Grand Ronde.

"We're going to be working on the site just north of Elders Housing," said Tao Orion, co-director of Aprovecho.

Orion, along with her husband, Abel Kloster, and Portland State University faculty member Judy Bluehorse Skelton (Cherokee and Nez Perce descendant) will lead the classes.

"One of the things that's cool is class members will have a chance to design what they would like to see," Orion said.

Advance work was done by the Tribe's Culture Committee, with committee and Tribal member Perri McDaniel leading the way. The first of two 10-week classes will begin Saturday, Jan. 28, on the Tribal campus.

In the first class, students will evaluate areas to be planted and plan a garden. The second class will be dedicated to building the structures and planting.

"Permaculture," said Orion, "is an ecological design system for sustainability in all aspects of our lives: a powerful tool for understanding the interrelationships of food production, energy, shelter, water, social and economic systems.

"Permaculture teaches us how to build natural homes, grow our own food, restore diminished landscapes and ecosystems, catch rainwater, build communities, take care of waste and much more."

McDaniel has been a champion of returning to natural and Native food ways and sources for many years. What is so attractive to McDaniel about Aprovecho, she said, is that its philosophy is working with nature rather than against it, and relying on the teachings of indigenous wisdom.

"We really want to bring back our traditional foods, including camas, tarweed, Indian celery," McDaniel said.

Meanwhile, at the same time

that this project is getting under way, the Tribe's Natural Resources Department has been working on the Tye Project with Cultural Resources and the Institute for Applied Ecology. Together, they supplied and planted many traditional foods on the newly designated Tye Nature Preserve, formerly known as the Brown property, next to the Tribal Housing Authority building.

Even Tribal kindergarteners got involved, watching the planting process.

"We're also looking for opportunities over by the Rogue block (formerly Bode and Thompson properties) to create areas for Native cultural plants," said Tribal member Mike Wilson, manager of the Tribe's Natural Resources Department.

"It's just coming together so great," said McDaniel. "I didn't realize they were doing that. Everybody's thinking the same thing. Our hope is that our course will pull it all together."

"One of the things we've always pushed is adding the human element," said Tribal member David Lewis, manager of Cultural Resources Department, "to the things we use every day.

"When Europeans came and found what they thought was a pristine landscape, that landscape was actually managed by Indian people who were setting fire to it and using the food and weaving resources that came from it. There isn't a pristine landscape without Natives choosing to save certain resources for daily use."

The Elder's site is "so close to Elder housing that people have an opportunity to design gathering places for the Elders to come together and be with the kids," said Skelton. "So, if we want to do an activity, a central activity, there might be a fireplace, an outdoor classroom to gather. It is not just a garden or a design of intensively planted edibles and medicinal plants. It's also a space for humans to get close to the plants and interact. We may also have a place to bake breads."

A question-and-answer session and sign-up for the first course is scheduled from 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 14, in Education Classroom 126. Lunch from 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. will be provided.

Registration Form For Winter 2012 Permaculture Design Certificate Course at Grand Ronde

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

Interested in Course Credit: _____

If you have questions about the course or registration, please e-mail Tao Orion at tao@aprovecho.net for more information.

Please send registration form to Aprovecho at 80574 Hazelton Rd.

Cottage Grove, OR, 97424 attn: Tao Orion

"One of the things we want in this process," said McDaniel, "is the input of Elders and others in the community who grew up with some of these methods, and can teach us about them. They are all encouraged to participate in the process."

"Permaculture is a western word meaning permanent agriculture," said Skelton, who teaches a number of courses focusing on environmental education through Native American perspectives. "And it's the closest thing that I've run into that suggests indigenous ways of being on the land and being with the land. It is something kind of new in the last 25 years, but it's actually very ancient for indigenous people. It's about working with nature and respecting the earth cycles.

"Indigenous permaculture is respecting the intrinsic value of place, of the land, and working with it, so you are getting your food, your medicine, your fuel, a sustainable source of fuel, getting your fiber, plants or animals. We call them the five Fs (fiber, fuel, food, pharmacy and fun).

"There are the rewards of people working together, because you are designing and imagining how we

would live here for what we would call the seventh generation; living in a respectful, responsible way, so in seven generations, the people will be living just as well; not just to survive but to thrive."

Skelton also is wrapping her new senior capstone project, required of all Portland State seniors, around permaculture and its many attributes. Portland State students working on this capstone will participate with the Grand Ronde community to bring ceremony and community into the work.

The course will be accredited by Humboldt State University in California and credits may be transferrable from there. Classes are payable through the Tribe's Education Fund.

A natural question is whether these ideas will lead to self-reliance at the local level.

"That's an interesting question," said Orion. "To me it's really about a community and a network, like a spider web. I think we're moving beyond the ideas of self-reliance and on to mutually supportive relationships. A real sustainable culture is one working together and sharing our strengths when appropriate." ■

Elders' Christmas Party set for Dec. 16

The Elders' Christmas Party will be held starting at 3 p.m. Friday, Dec. 16, at the Elders' Activity Center.

The event will start with snacks followed by dinner served at 4 p.m.

In lieu of a gift exchange this year, Tribal Elders will accept blankets or lap blankets for needy Elders, or toys, hats or mittens that are unwrapped for the Willamina Tree of Giving.

The party is for Tribal Elders 55 and older.

For more information, contact Tribal Elder Linda Brandon at 971-267-0918. ■



Basket weaving
with Connie Graves

Where: Elders' Activity Center
When: Every Tuesday
Time: 12:30 P.M.

We will be having a basket weaving class every Tuesday that is open to the public. If you have any questions, contact Brian Krehbiel at 503-879-4639

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