

# 'We should do more of these'

## GRAND RONDE WOMEN continued from front page

trade, women weavers of clothes and baskets, women contributing to our knowledge today of Native language, powwows and royalty, Restoration efforts, present and former women in Tribal government, and "The Missing Generation," telling the stories of Native women held in prisons and mental institutions, some used like test animals for so-called scientific research.

"A lot of this information has never been collected before," said Tribal member and Cultural Resources Department Manager David Lewis. "The stories we are telling are stories that have gone untold for a century and a half. It is important that we get them out there."

And yet, it still doesn't tell the whole story.

"Halfway through, I realized I can't do justice to my family," Brown said. "It would take more months and more space, but I want to capture the stories and the lives, not just of the women, but the men also before they are gone."

"For me," said Millie Harmon of Salem, "the main thing is there is so much information here that we don't know and hasn't been gathered before. I'm really pleased that someone has captured this before the people have died."

Among the exhibits, Brown developed a basket map tying together different styles of weaving with



Photos by Michelle Alaimo

Tribal member Stephanie Wood, right, tells Lisa Gilman, director of the Folklore Studies program at the University of Oregon, about the section of the "shawash-ill?i luchmon — ntsayka ikanum: Grand Ronde Women — Our Story" exhibit that includes her family during the exhibit's opening reception at the Willamette Heritage Center at The Mill in Salem on Thursday, April 5. Wood curated that portion of the exhibit for her master's degree terminal project and Gilman is her adviser for the project.

different Native areas. She worked more than two months with master weaver Margaret Mathewson, who also advises other Tribes interested in local weaving methods.

The exhibit features many of the raw materials from which baskets are made and a sign encouraged viewers to "Please touch."

"You don't see this kind of map," said Lewis. "And most of these styles are from people who came

through Grand Ronde."

"It makes me so mad that we gave them \$35 for all their land," said Salem resident and Willamette Heritage Center member Karen Bender, referring to one section of the exhibit. At Termination, allotments of Tribal people were sold as community property and each Tribal member received \$35. "That's just unreal."

"Because of reading the stories,

it puts a face on Indian culture and their heritage in the area," said her husband, Ed. "We lived in Oregon all our life, but we never heard this."

If the information was new to some, for Tribal Elder Kathryn Harrison the exhibit brought on another reaction. "It takes me back to some wonderful Elders," she said. "They really showed us the way. They're the glue that held us together. I'm proud of our women."

Tribal Council Chairwoman Cheryle A. Kennedy said the big thing was the attendance of so many youth.

"Thank you to all the families who brought children," Kennedy said. "This is what it is all about: to teach our children."

In fact, some 35 members — many of them youth — of the Grand Ronde Canoe Family attended for drumming and singing at the dinner. And many others were on hand with their parents on the third floor of the Mission Mill, where dinner and drumming were held.

"The Canoe Family," said Harrison, "they make you proud over and over."

Among the youth was Tribal member Dakota Ross, 10, who came with his family. He had already seen the exhibit.

"Really interesting," he said. Kennedy also said that her own grandmother and mother "raised us to be strong women. As Grand Ronde women, we stand. We hold our family close. We encourage them."

Then, Kennedy spoke about pioneer women. "These women that came west on the Oregon Trail, they are the hardest of all human beings. Now, we're all here together forging forward in partnership."

"There isn't anyone here who doesn't have a woman in their life who made a difference," said Tribal Council member Kathleen Tom.

"We very much value the partnership and friendship (of the Grand Ronde people)," said Ross Stout, president of the Willamette Heritage Center Board of Directors. Noting four exhibits on which the Heritage Center and the Tribe have participated, Stout said, "We're better telling the story of the Willamette Valley's first inhabitants."

Among their descendants was Tribal member Mike Colton, who came with his family to see the credit that went to his late mother, former Tribal Elder Jackie Whisler, featured prominently in the section on Tribal Restoration.

"This is something that is long overdue," said Tribal Elder Gladys Hobbs. "It's also nice to see that we're letting everybody know we're bringing our language and basket weaving to the forefront. It's very heartwarming."

"We should do more of these," said Tribal member and Culture Committee member Perri McDaniel.

At the same time, Brown was thinking about the recent days when she was working day and night without much, if any, sleep



Tribal Chairwoman Cheryle A. Kennedy, right, and Tribal Elder Margaret Provost watch a video that is part of the "shawash-ill?i luchmon — ntsayka ikanum: Grand Ronde Women — Our Story" exhibit during the exhibit's opening reception at the Willamette Heritage Center at The Mill in Salem on Thursday, April 5.

getting the exhibit ready.

"I was tired," she said. "I wanted to snuggle up in my jammies. And I thought, 'What if I had to do the Trail of Tears?'"

Brown led a group that included Cultural Resources Program Manager Kathy Cole, Secretary Veronica Montano and Hermila Chavez,

as well as University of Oregon graduate student Stephanie Wood (all are members of the Tribe) in putting the project together.

In addition, master weaver Margaret Mathewson, and Tribal members Eirik Thorsgard, Travis Mercier, Brian Krehbiel, Bobby Mercier, David Harrelson and

Melisa Chandler participated. Krehbiel is Cultural Education specialist, Mercier is Cultural Language specialist, Harrelson is Cultural Protection specialist and Chandler is a Cultural Site monitor.

The exhibition runs at Willamette Heritage Center through Monday, May 28. ■

## Grand Ronde women discuss their leadership roles

By Ron Karten

Smoke Signals staff writer

SALEM — When Pleasant Valley Presbyterian Church was being built in the late 1850s, the Native peoples who would become citizens of the Confederate Tribes of Grand Ronde were being forced marched from their many homes up to the Grand Ronde Reservation.

On Saturday, April 7, the church, originally built in the Aumsville area and moved to the Willamette Heritage Center site in the 1970s, was a place where history buffs and other Oregonians learned a little of what it is like to be a woman in the Grand Ronde Tribe, and what made them the leaders they are today.

As a supporting event to the Grand Ronde exhibit, "shawash-ill?i luchmon — ntsayka ikanum: Grand Ronde Women — Our Story," Tribal Elder June Olson read from her book, "Great Circle, The Grand Ronde Reser-

vation 1855-1905," and signed copies.

"This work that she has produced," said Peter Booth, executive director of Willamette Heritage Center, "records a very, very important transition for the Grand Ronde people."

"I wrote the book," Olson said, "because as a Native American person, I am pledged with remembering."

She spoke about the process of writing, read stories from the book and answered questions.

Olson said the Trail of Tears brought together peoples of different languages, religious views and philosophies. Tribes and bands tended to stay together, even building separate dance houses.

"They were still trying to hold on to their Native identity within their new community," Olson said.



Photos by Ron Karten

Tribal Elder June Olson answers questions from the audience during her book reading at the Willamette Heritage Center on Saturday, April 7.

The work also will be important for genealogical studies, she said.

But it almost never got written. "It took years to research," Olson said, "but I didn't know how to handle it. I walked around it for awhile."

For a time, she put it away and it might have stayed away if her



Willamette Heritage Center Executive Director Peter Booth introduces the panel discussion featuring women leaders from the Grand Ronde Tribe. Former U.S. Congresswoman Elizabeth Furse, far left, moderated the panel that included, from left, Grand Ronde Tribal Elder Kathryn Harrison, Tribal Council member Kathleen Tom and Tribal Chairwoman Cheryle A. Kennedy.

daughter had not invited her to an estate sale, completely unrelated to the book project. At the sale, they were giving away historical magazines, which included some interesting information about the Tribe, and "it was just what I needed to keep on with what I was doing."

Tribal Council member Kathleen Tom called Olson, "One of the treasures of our Tribe."

Following Olson's presentation, former Oregon Congresswoman Elizabeth Furse, who has long been a friend of the Tribe and was instrumental in helping the Tribe's Restoration effort, served

as moderator for three of Grand Ronde's women leaders: Tribal Elder and former Tribal Chairwoman Kathryn Harrison, current Tribal Chairwoman Cheryle A. Kennedy and Tom.

"I met Kathryn Harrison early, early in the work of Restoration," Furse said. "She and I used to travel to Washington, D.C., and I can tell you that it wasn't first class."

The work, however, was not in vain. "The Tribe's contribution has been hugely important to the state and the local communities," Furse said.

She asked each of the female leaders, "What kicked you into being so active?"

For Harrison, it was her father. "As I grew and lost my parents, I always wanted to go home," she said. The Tribe became that home.

When she got here, she thought, "I'm walking the same path my father walked, looking at the same trees my father looked at. I

knew I'd feel at home there."

Kennedy said that she was influenced by the murder of her father when she was young. Raised by her mother and her grandmother, Kennedy learned "not to be a slacker, and that you have everything you need within you to do the things of this life."

Her grandmother's father was a medicine man. Her grandmother would take her out and teach her about different plants and their uses. "I thought I was special because she was sharing this with me. She taught us that we had to be careful how we live, and that whatever we do, we do it in a good way."

A mission home picked Kennedy out and told her, "You have some unique qualities," and suggested she had a future in government.

"That was scary for me," she said, "but others told me the same thing."

In the end, "the big thing is to have the willingness," she said.

Tom, who is on the board of Willamette Heritage Center, is the fourth generation in her family to serve on Tribal Council.

"I don't think you wake up every day and think you'll be a leader, but duty was instilled in me," Tom said.

As one of the many relocated Native families, the Toms spent many years away from Grand Ronde. In 1989, she said, her father, Tribal Elder Leon "Chip" Tom, called and told her, "You need to come back and serve your people."

"My mom was a fighting Irish woman who said, 'There is nothing you can't accomplish.' I also always had strong women around me. I remember when I saw Kathryn Harrison, I thought, 'I can do that.'"

"It's a value we need to tell our children: Run for office. You can make a difference for your people." ■