

# Erin Soderberg meets her culture through Native arts

By Ron Karten

Smoke Signals staff writer

Erin Soderberg, Alaskan-born and -raised granddaughter of former Tribal Council member Wink Soderberg and his wife, Kathy, is taking a love of her culture to college in Oregon.

From seventh through 12th grade, she learned about Native arts and culture through Tlinget master carver Jon Rowan, Native arts teacher at Klawock High School in southeastern Alaska. She made carvings and moccasins, a bowl and a rattle, among a dozen or so projects over the years.

"I really want to give him credit," she says. "He taught me everything I know about Native arts. He was a lot of fun and a really wise guy."

Along the way, she visited Grand Ronde and had a look at Umpqua crafts. With Rowan's support, she shifted her education to learn the Native cultural arts through the Umpquas, who now live on through her and others in the Grand Ronde Tribe.

She started sharing her culture with her grandparents when she was 12, grandfather Wink Soderberg says.

"She sent me a carving when she was 12 years old, which was Tlinget," he recalls. "I didn't know she was doing anything like that.



Photo by Michelle Alaimo

**Erin Soderberg, 18, displays some Native arts that she has made over the years, including a carving, which was inspired by the pole in front of the Tribal plankhouse, the Tlinget rattle lying next to her and the moccasins she's wearing.**

I was amazed. When she sent me other things, later on, I couldn't believe it. I took them and showed them around. Everybody very impressed."

At 18, Erin is a freshman at Eastern Oregon University this year and is moving right away to join up with other Natives at the school.

First thing, she contacted Tribal Elder and former Education Department Manager Jackie Leno Grant, who is Rural and Native American Programs coordinator for the university.

"The Indian club on campus — Speel-Ya (Coyote) — NA Student Council is one of EOU's oldest and most active clubs," says Grant.

In November, the group organizes events for Native American Heritage Month. It works with other campus departments on events for all students. These events include Indian arts and speakers. In May, the group sponsors the annual Indian Arts Festival Powwow.

"It's one of the integral groups on campus," says Grant.

Soderberg arrived in La Grande for her first semester with experience as student council president in both her junior and senior years at Klawock High School.

"I liked parliamentary procedure," she says, "and learned how to properly work with people in uncomfortable situations. It was hard at times."

Starting out with courses to prepare herself for a nursing degree, Erin also intends to continue im-

mersing herself in Native culture.

"I really want to get more involved in culture," she says. "I wanted to learn more because culture is part of who I am. Not living (in Grand Ronde) has affected me, because I always wanted to be more involved."

Native American attendance at the school last year included 85 students with about 50 participating in the online distance education program, says Grant.

Last year, two Grand Ronde Tribal members graduated from Eastern Oregon — Myranda Markey and Kristi DeLoe.

"The numbers are small," Grant says, "but it is so nice to have someone from our own Tribe here. She looks to be a very competent and outgoing young lady. She is a delight and Eastern is a good fit for her."

Erin also enjoys volleyball and has been working in the Klawock fishing industry — cleaning boats and fish and vacuum sealing fish — after school since she was 9 years old.

"I really liked it," she says. "It's a pretty cool thing to do in the summers. I get to meet a lot of new people, and you get to know them because they come back year after year. You develop relationships." ■

## University of Oregon store seeks artwork for sale

The University of Oregon Museum of Natural and Cultural History's museum store, Past and Presents, is seeking a limited number of artists interested in selling their original artwork on consignment in the store.

Pacific Northwest Tribal members interested in the opportunity should submit five images of their work for consideration to [tracey@uoregon.edu](mailto:tracey@uoregon.edu).

The university's Museum of Natural and Cultural History protects significant collections, enhances knowledge and encourages stewardship of human and natural history through research, preservation and education.

Past and Presents offers a comprehensive selection of regional books and gifts that reflect the museum's exhibits, collections and research, as well as the inspiration of the Pacific Northwest landscape.

For more information, contact Tracey Bell at 541-346-1574. ■

## Testing and admissions fee assistance

Enrolled Tribal members can request assistance with test fees (i.e. GRE, SAT, LSAT, ACT) and admissions application fees.

Contact Higher Education for more information at 1-800-422-0232, ext. 2275. ■

## IHS launches campaign to combat drug, alcohol abuse

Indian Health Service, in partnership with the Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board, has developed the "I Strengthen My Nation" educational campaign to help Native communities address drug and alcohol abuse. The campaign delivers relevant messages and information designed to empower Native youth to resist pressure to use drugs and alcohol.

Educational materials were developed in collaboration with Tribal community members and can be downloaded from the Indian Health Service Web site at [www.ihs.gov/MedicalPrograms/Behavioral/](http://www.ihs.gov/MedicalPrograms/Behavioral/). ■

## Recreation starts yoga, fitness classes

The Tribe's Recreation Program has started two new exercise programs in the Tribal gym. Led by Melisa Chandler, Vinyasa Flow Yoga is offered from noon to 1 p.m. Monday and Friday. Vinyasa Flow Yoga focuses on the synchronization of breath with postures and is one of the more active, athletic forms of yoga. Led by Recreation Coordinator Matt Mosely, a cross training-style fitness class is offered from 5:15 to 6:15 p.m. Monday. Workouts will consist of timed stations, max reps and minute-for-minute exercises.

For more information about either exercise class, contact Mosley at 503-879-1369 or [matthew.mosley@grandronde.org](mailto:matthew.mosley@grandronde.org). ■

# Carving Class

Please come join us, first class will start on Oct. 3

Come learn the Columbia river art style. Cultural Resources will be having an ongoing class every Wednesday at the carving shop down by the food bank starting on Oct. 3. We will only have room for 10 students. Please contact me at (503) 879-4639.

Or e-mail [brian.krehbiel@grandronde.org](mailto:brian.krehbiel@grandronde.org). Please leave a detailed message.

I look forward to hearing from you hayu masi