

Heritage Commission meets in Grand Ronde

By Ron Karten

Smoke Signals staff writer

The results of two Oregon heritage studies were unveiled at the Oregon Heritage Commission's quarterly meeting held at the Education Department in Grand Ronde on Monday, Oct. 22.

Fifteen of 16 commissioners, including David Lewis, Tribal Museum Curator/Cultural Liaison, attended the session to conduct regular commission business.

A \$40,000 heritage-tourism study, conducted by Mandala Research for two federal agencies and a tourism business, found that 78 percent of all U.S. leisure travelers participate in cultural and/or heritage activities while traveling and that these travelers spend significantly more than other travelers.

The study divided cultural travelers into five groups with different travel interests and travel habits. Leading heritage interests expressed in the study included historic sites (66 percent), attending historical re-enactments (64 percent), visiting art museums/galleries (54 percent), attending an art/craft fair (45 percent), attending a professional dance performance (44 percent), visiting state/national parks (41 percent), shopping in museum stores (32 percent) and exploring urban neighborhoods (30 percent).

The second study, from a legislative task force, focused on the vitality of Oregon's heritage and improvements that might come through state legislation. The study found "unstable and inadequate" funding, "little meaningful coordination" and an "inability to measure and articulate the economic value of Oregon heritage," among eight problems.

Recommendations, not surprisingly, included legislative fixes for



Photo by Michelle Alaimo

David Lewis, left, Tribal Museum Curator/Tribal Cultural Liaison, listens as Kyle Jansson talks about results from a tourism study during the Oregon Heritage Commission meeting held at the Tribe's Adult Education Building on Monday, Oct. 22. Lewis is a member of the commission and was appointed to the post by the governor.

better funding and coordination among the state's more than 1,000 heritage-based nonprofits.

Lewis recommended that the report go to the Legislative Commission on Indian Services for presentation to the state's federally recognized Tribes "for action on their part."

"Our mission is to raise all boats," said Alice Norris, executive director of the Willamette Falls Heritage Area Coalition. During the meeting, she received support from the board for a State Heritage Areas program that would enable groups like the Willamette Falls Heritage Area Coalition to come together from across geographic and political boundaries to build a heritage area.

"History and culture are part of our everyday living and we need to pay for it," said Commissioner E. John Rumpakis, an award-winning supporter of heritage issues in Oregon.

"It's about performance," said

Roger Roper, deputy State Historic Preservation Officer and assistant director for Heritage Programs in the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department. He serves as staff for the commission. "It requires ongoing oversight."

"We need to think further into the future," said Lewis, "to see where these plans are taking us."

Lewis, who has served on the board for more than three years, was joined in the meeting by Commissioner Dawnielle Tehama

(Klamath), who also serves on the board of Discover Klamath.

"We're pushing a lot of agendas," said Lewis, who indicated that his role on the board is not solely to pave the way for Tribal agendas, but to serve the best interests of the state. With that said, he is pushing, through the commission, for better Native content in school curricula and heritage programs that are open to Tribal peoples.

"It's amazing how much we've accomplished since Restoration," said Tribal Council Vice Chair Jack Giffen Jr. in welcoming the group, "but that said, there's plenty left to do."

In providing the "five-minute version" of Grand Ronde history, Cultural Protection Specialist Eirik Thorsgard noted that the Tribe has been helping "both our people and the local community as well."

"Much of the recent progress," said Lewis, "originated with a 2009 meeting in the Crook County Library in Prineville. That was my first meeting as a commissioner. There is when all of the commissioners backed a proposal to do a study of the problems and issues with heritage in Oregon because we all admitted that we did not know enough about the problem to offer any solutions. So these two studies and the previous heritage study came out of that notion." ■

Totem unveiling

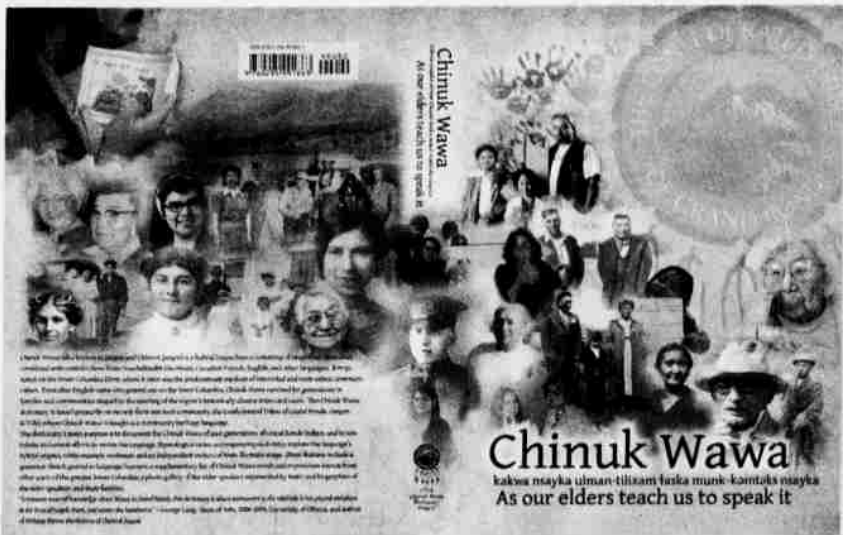


Photos by Michelle Alaimo

Greg Archuleta, left, and Jordan Mercier sing "New Beginnings" during the opening of the unveiling ceremony for the sculpture "Totem II" at the Jean Road Fire Station in Lake Oswego on Thursday, Oct. 11. Behind them is the wrapped sculpture that was revealed at the end of the ceremony. Mercier, left, and Archuleta, right, had their picture taken with artist Travis Pond, who created "Totem II." The sculpture is 17-foot-tall and made of recycled and reclaimed metal objects.



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