



Courtesy photo

A panel from the "We Were Here First ... And We're Here To Stay!" exhibit that will be on display at the Willamette Heritage Center at The Mill in Salem from Friday, April 12, through Monday, May 27.

Telling an untold story

Tribes mounts exhibit about Termination and Restoration

By Ron Karten

Smoke Signals staff writer

Honoring the 30th anniversary of the Grand Ronde Tribe's Restoration set for celebration this year on Nov. 22, the Cultural Exhibits and Archives Program of the newly created Land and Culture Department is mounting a large, comprehensive exhibit with hundreds of items, some dating back to the 1840s, said curator David Lewis, who is Tribal historian.

The exhibit, "We Were Here First ... And We're Here To Stay!" will represent "the complexity of Termination and Restoration history," Lewis said from the new program offices in the former Willamina Middle School.

"We thought it would be important to have an exhibit about that," Lewis said.

Lewis, Cultural Interpretive Specialist Julie Brown and Collections Specialist Veronica Montana began working on the project last summer. By the time the exhibit opens on Thursday, April 11, for members of the Tribe and special guests, Brown will have put in five weeks of full-time work collecting, organizing and designing exhibition pieces.

In late March, half a dozen tables were pulled together in the center of a large room that also holds work stations at the edges for the program. On the tables were a few dozen large maps with legends and comments by Tribal leaders, politicians and many others who have played a role or had important things to say about the Tribe's battles over Termination and Restoration.

All together, the pieces document the formation of the reservation in Grand Ronde and the intentions of federal and state governments to assimilate Tribal peoples through treaties and education, including the overriding philosophies that brought the plans to life.

Exhibit elements will include an original passbook and allotment book borrowed from the Oregon Historical Society.

The passbook documents the monitored and restricted comings

If you go

"We Were Here First ... And We're Here To Stay!"

Grand Opening: 5 p.m. Thursday, April 11

Admission: Free for Tribal members and special guests
What: Dinner, official opening of exhibit

Where: Willamette Heritage Center at The Mill, 1313 Mill St. S.E., Salem

Opening for the public: 10 a.m. Friday, April 12, through Monday, May 27

More info: 503-585-7012

and goings of the Grand Ronde Tribal people who sought to visit friends and relatives off the reservation.

"The reservation was literally a prison camp," said Lewis.

The allotment book documents Tribal members who received land from the federal government between approximately 1887 and 1910.

Tribal perspectives in words and old photographs document the condition of the reservation in the years leading up to the Termination era, as well as fallout from attempts to assimilate Native Americans through congressional actions and Indian agents of the time.

"It tells how people survived and what they thought in this period ending with Restoration in 1983," Lewis said.

Much of the exhibit is devoted to original and reproduced documents that initiated both Termination and Restoration. Copies of treaties and representations of the lands those treaties covered also will be included.

Another section includes words and images of "what we have built out of Restoration," Lewis said.

Baskets "representing the continuation of our culture will be on display. Not much was lost, though many crafts were not practiced for awhile," Lewis said. "It tells a story that most people will not be familiar with." ■

Elders seeking yard sale donations

Tribal Elders are regularly seeking donations of clean, useable items for fundraising garage sales.

To donate an item or items, contact Tribal Elders Linda Brandon at 971-267-0918 or Duane Wheeler at 541-992-3254. ■

Volleyball nights held on Wednesdays

The Tribe's Recreation Program holds open volleyball from 5 to 7 p.m. Wednesdays in the Tribal gym.

Volleyball is open to anyone who wishes to participate.

For more information, contact Recreation Coordinator Matthew Mosley at 503-879-1369 or matthew.mosley@grandronde.org. ■

College Placement Testing

Are you thinking about starting a college term? College Placement Testing for Chemeketa Community College is available at the Adult Education Building by appointment.

Call 503-879-2282 to make an appointment.