

Lewis elected chair of Oregon Heritage Commission

By Ron Karten

Smoke Signals staff writer

Tribal Historian David Lewis was elected chairman of the Oregon Heritage Commission after four years of service on the board.

The unanimous vote came during the May 9 meeting at the Oregon Historical Society, making Lewis the first Native American to serve in that capacity.

"It's a great opportunity to continue to pursue progressive programs in Oregon," said Lewis, "including linkages to education. I also want to make sure that the Tribes are well represented in the heritage of Oregon. The commission has been very good to make this an important part of Oregon's heritage and so I want to continue to support that."

"I am so delighted because David is thoroughly equipped with knowledge and expertise to infuse the commission with new energy, insight and leadership," said Tribal Council member Cheryl A. Kennedy. "All of Oregon will benefit from David's appointment to this prestigious position and I rest assured that Oregon Tribes will be well-informed of commission activities."

"I have been impressed by David's advocacy for the place of the Tribes in accurately portraying Oregon's history, including the ugly and painful early stories that today's Oregonians might rather not remember," said outgoing Chair Jan Mitchell.

"As museum curator and cultural liaison for the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde, David has a great skill set to offer the commission," said Vice Chair Jon Tullis. "He has firsthand knowledge of the profound importance of preserving collections of artifacts, and understanding and celebrating history."

"The Tribal history and perspective that David brings to the commission is essential to our mission, and, of course, reminds us of the depth and profundity of Native culture."

Board member Kimberly Jensen said that Lewis is "absolutely committed to preserving the diverse heritage in our region, and is especially interested in taking the vital next step of educating all Oregonians about the challenges and successes in our collective past. Everyone in our region will be enriched by his service."

The Heritage Commission, an arm of the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department, meets quarterly and provides archeological services and, through grants, supports programs honoring Oregon's historic cemeteries, trails and main streets.

As chair, Lewis said, "I want to continue to pursue collaborations between various institutions in Oregon with education. We have noticed for awhile that heri-



David Lewis

tage has been somewhat separate from education.

"We want students to understand their local history and the various

cultures of their community. We want to inspire people to form collaborations that are mutually beneficial to the whole state."

"David is a scholar," said Mitchell, "and he contributes actively to discussions of a broad range of topics covered in the work of the commission. He is credible and respectful of others."

"The Heritage Commission," she continued, "includes a bunch of intelligent, well-educated and professional people representing all facets of heritage work. Chairing such a passionate group for four or more hours takes energy and focus."

Lewis said he feels a sense of accomplishment from his selection as chair.

"It's important that a Tribal member is now at the chair level," he said. "It's a testament to the work we have done throughout the state on increasing the average Oregonian's knowledge of the Tribal history of the state."

"It also tells me that the work I have done in the first four years on the commission has been noticed and well-supported by the whole commission to the point where they want me to take a leadership role."

He also credits his University of Oregon education, up to and including his Ph.D. in 2009, and his role in Tribal heritage issues for "helping me gain broad experience directly applicable to the discussions and work of the commission."

Previously, Don Ivy, retiring Cultural Resources coordinator of the Coquille Tribe, was Heritage Commission vice chair. He recently received an Oregon Heritage Commission Excellence award for his years of work, said Mitchell.

Currently serving on the commission board with Lewis is Dawnielle Tehama, a Klamath Indian.

"I will watch the work of the Heritage Commission with interest to see what he brings to the role," said Mitchell, "and what he learns from the job of leading the commission. I expect that it will be a positive experience on both counts."

"I have always been impressed with his perspective, his thoughtful leadership and his ability to solve problems, often with a fresh approach," said Tullis. "I think he'll make a fine chairman, and I believe he has the entire commission's enthusiasm and confidence." ■

Community members wanted

The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde's 477 Employment and Training Program and Land and Culture Department have resources that can be utilized along with community members who have a passion for gardening or want to learn the art of agriculture. If you are a Grand Ronde Tribal community member and want to be a part of the planning, preparation and cultivation of the Tribal garden and orchard site for next year's planting season, contact Barbara Gibbons at 800-242-8196, ext. 2135, or e-mail barbara.gibbons@grandronde.org. ■



Photo by Michelle Alaimo

Tribal Council member Kathleen Tom, right, hands smoked salmon, which was caught, smoked and packaged by the Tribe's Natural Resources Department, out to attendees of the First Salmon Dinner at the McLean House in West Linn on Wednesday, May 15.

'We appreciate you coming here and sharing this meal with us'

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ciate you coming here and sharing this meal with us."

After Kennedy's and Tom's speeches, the drum group played a blessing song as attendees returned to the interior of the McLean House for dinner. Inside, a copy of the Tribe's Willamette Valley Treaty was hung to reinforce that West Linn is part of the Tribe's ceded lands.

The dinner continued the appetizer theme of combining traditional Native foods with a modern culinary approach. Appetizers included venison bresola, elk mortadella and hazelnut-foie gras truffle, camas-acorn crisps and pickled fiddleheads.

Other courses included nettle soup, Chinook salmon, gathered greens and, as a nod to Tribal efforts to raise money to send representatives to Washington, D.C., to push for Restoration in the early 1980s by selling huckleberry jam, a honey-butter-milk sorbet with huckleberry preserves served in a lidless Mason jar.

"This celebration of the first salmon features the traditional foods of the original Oregonians," chef Matt Bennett said. "It is not an anthropological study; it is as modern as the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde are today. With that said, it is hard to cook and eat these foods without thinking of those that came before."

A 2006 painting, "Sea Lion & Salmon," by Greg Robinson (Chinook) adorned the menus placed at each table setting.

The event was attended by employees of Willamette Partnership sponsors Wildwood Urban Design

and Development, Mahonia Vineyards & Nursery, CleanWater Services, the Freshwater Trust, Capital Pacific Bank and the law firm of Perkins Coie.

In addition, Oregon Attorney General Ellen Rosenblum, Gov. John Kitzhaber's chief of staff, Curtis Robinhold, and Troutdale Mayor Doug Doust attended. Representatives from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife, the state Department of Environmental Quality and U.S. Forest Service also attended.

"I really want to thank the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde for telling their story," said Dick Pedersen, director of the state Department of Environmental Quality. "It is such a powerful story. I'm just really humbled to be in this place where you celebrated so much so many years ago and a week ago restored that tradition."

"What I learned in my business, as environmental director, from that story is how important it is that everything is connected and that we are so connected as humans to the air we breathe, the water we depend on and the land we live on, and you can't separate those connections today from the generations on into the future. It's a great lesson and you have to keep teaching it to us."

Other Tribal employees who attended included Fish & Wildlife Program Manager Kelly Dirksen, Ceded Lands Manager Michael Karnosh and Public Affairs Acting Administrative Assistant Chelsea Clark, who, with Portland area staff Lisa Archuleta and Hernandez, helped Taylor organize and work the event. ■