

Tribe hosts first History Conference

About 150 attend all-day event to learn about Grand Ronde's past

By Dean Rhodes

Smoke Signals editor

Tribal Historian Dr. David Lewis was pleased as he looked out on an almost full Tribal Community Center, which hosted the first Tribal History Conference on Thursday, Nov. 14.

About 150 people invested an eight-hour day to learn about Grand Ronde Tribal history after hearing about the conference through e-mail, word-of-mouth or seeing announcements in *Smoke Signals* and on Facebook.

"I am humbled by the response," Lewis said. "It tells me that this is needed."

The all-day conference was broken into six sessions with the morning events concentrating on internal Tribal historical efforts and the afternoon presentations featuring historians talking about research into Oregon's Native American history that relates to Grand Ronde.

The conference started promptly at 9 a.m. with an invocation from Tribal Elder and former longtime Tribal Chair Kathryn Harrison and a drum featuring Tribal members and employees Bobby Mercier, Travis Stewart and Jordan Mercier.

Tribal Council Vice Chair Jack Giffen Jr. welcomed conference attendees.

"We've come a long way from our 2.5-acre cemetery," Giffen said as he thanked the Tribe's Land and Culture staff for their efforts in putting on the History Conference. "They have a huge mountain to climb because of the 28 Tribes and Bands that make up the Tribe," he said.

Tribal Culture Committee Vice Chair Marcus Gibbons also acknowledged how difficult it is for Tribal Land and Culture employees to incorporate every Tribe and Band into their thinking as they research Tribal history and plan events.

Lewis, who very early on started referring to the well-attended conference as the "first annual," said the event would help remedy the fact that the histories of Oregon's Tribes have not been properly documented.

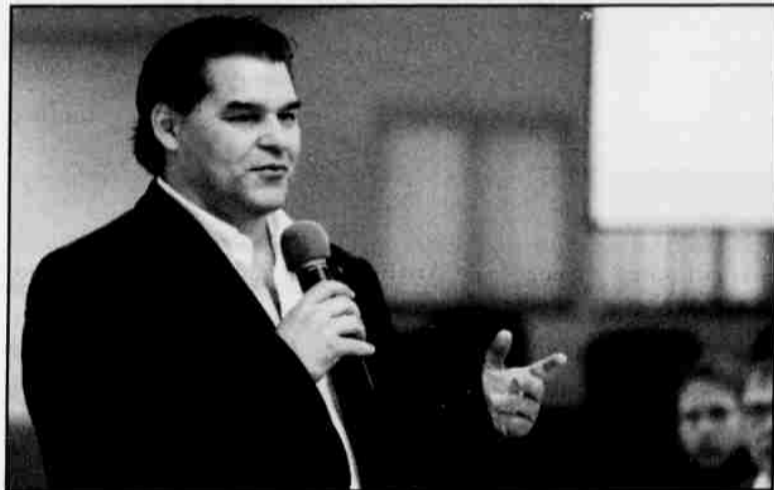
Or, as one presenter said later, it will help present historical information from a Tribal perspective and maybe prompt a "re-appreciation" of what occurred.

The first morning session featured Dr. Margaret Mathewson, a longtime contractor with the Grand Ronde Tribe, discuss the Grand Ronde Basketry Map, which gives an overview of traditional basketry in the region. "It's not a dead tradition," Mathewson said about Native basketry. "It's a living, real, real



Photos by Michelle Alaimo

Dr. Margaret Mathewson, a contractor with the Tribe, talks about the Grand Ronde Basketry Map during the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde Tribal History Conference held in the Tribal Community Center on Thursday, Nov. 14.



Tribal Historian Dr. David Lewis was the host of the first annual Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde Tribal History Conference held in the Tribal Community Center on Thursday, Nov. 14.

the old Grand Ronde Reservation using Louis Kenoyer's autobiography of a

Tualatin and their efforts to translate it from the Tualatin Kalapuya language.

After lunch, Dr. Stephen Dow Beckham talked about the failure of the Oregon Coast Reservation plan, Dr. Robert Boyd from Portland State University discussed the visual record of Native Americans in the Portland Basin before 1855 and Dr. R. Scott Byram gave a presentation on the Western Oregon Klickitats, centering on the years 1830-55.

The final session featured Dr. Dan Boxberger, professor and chair of the Anthropology Department at Western Washington University, talk about the 22 unratified treaties signed by Native American Tribes and Bands between 1850-55.

Boxberger said that antecedent Grand Ronde Tribes and Bands were party to at least 19 of the 22

unratified treaties, as well as the seven ratified treaties that were negotiated between 1853 and 1855.

Eventually, Boxberger said, his research, which will include transcriptions of the unratified and ratified treaties, will become a two-volume set that will be posted on the Grand Ronde Tribal Web site for use by the membership and other researchers.

Nora Pederson, a doctoral candidate from the University of Alberta, closed out the conference, talking about "Everyday Indigeneity in Western Oregon." She discussed how Grand Ronde transformed into a timber town in the early part of the 20th century and how Tribal members melded western lifestyles with traditional ways in their day-to-day living during that period.

Conference attendees included Tribal Council members Toby McClary and Jon A. George, as well as Tribal General Manager Mark Johnston, Attorney Rob Greene, Planner Rick George and Ceded Lands Manager Mike Karnosh.

Tribal members who attended part or all of the conference included Delores Parmenter, Reina Nelson, Wink Soderberg, Debi Anderson and Greg Archuleta, among others.

Other attendees represented Willamette National Forest, the Army Corps of Engineers, the University of Oregon, Oregon State University, the Oregon Historical Society, Willamette Heritage Center, the Oregon Geographic Names Board and the Willamette Falls Heritage Area Coalition.

"The project helps raise the profile of the Tribe about the importance of our efforts over the past 10 years as we have worked to develop our historic resources," said Land and Culture Manager Jan Looking Wolf Reibach in an e-mail the day after the conference. "Participants heard that we are writing the Tribe's history and our work will serve to more accurately relay the Tribe's heritage to the regional and even national communities."

Reibach said next year's event might expand to a two-day Culture Summit with the History Conference taking up one of those days.

Lewis thanked Land and Culture employees Julie Brown, Veronica Montano, Robert Ashman and Sequoia Raya, who assisted in putting on the History Conference, and acknowledged the help of Greene and Public Affairs Director Siobhan Taylor in getting the idea off the ground. ■

Volunteers wanted

The Tina Miller Community Center Thrift Store, 110 B. St., Willamina, helps fund the after-school and weekend youth community center located in the old Willamina High School gym. The thrift store is seeking volunteers who can help run the store, in addition to donated items and customers. The store accepts clothes, books, knickknacks, etc., as donations. It is open 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday and closed Sunday and Monday. Donations also can be left at the Wildwood Hotel and Restaurant in Willamina. For more information on volunteering, call 503-876-7897. The youth center and thrift store are nonprofit and 100 percent self-sustaining and volunteer-run. ■