

OIEA building Native curricula plans

Historically accurate and culturally relevant lessons on Indian life

By Ron Karten

Smoke Signals staff writer

The Oregon Indian Education Association held its second of three regional summits in Grand Ronde on Friday, Dec. 13, to help lay the groundwork for designing Tribal history and sovereignty curricula for fourth, eighth and 10th grades in Oregon schools.

The curricula will be aligned with Oregon common core standards. A previous effort, in 2005, was not aligned with Oregon standards and was not widely used.

The first regional summit was held at Lewis and Clark College and the last will be held in Southern Oregon.

The Grand Ronde summit is part of a project of the Education Association and Lewis & Clark College. It will hold three working group sessions in addition to the summits.

The Education Association curricula will complement the Grand Ronde Tribe's work in developing a fourth-grade curriculum and, later, curricula for eighth and 10th grades, said April Campbell, the state Education Department's Indian Education specialist. Previously, she was the Grand Ronde Tribe's Education Department manager.

Both sets of curricula will teach local Tribal histories and sovereignty. The Grand Ronde fourth-grade curriculum is currently being used in the Willamina School District, with feedback and analysis to follow before it is completed.

The Oregon Indian Education Association will complete its process with a draft of each curriculum seeking review and adoption by Oregon Tribes and the state De-

partment of Education. Completion is still a few years out, said Trinity Minahan, Adult Education coordinator and facilitator of the Grand Ronde curricula efforts.

The project has welcomed representatives from all nine federally recognized Tribes in Oregon, the state's Government-to-Government Tribal Education Cluster, Tribal education departments, teacher education programs, educational administration programs, communities with significant Native American populations, Title VII (K-12 Indian Education) administrators, Indian educators and administrators, and the Oregon Department of Education.

The project lead is Se-ah-dom Edmo (Shoshone-Bannock, Nez Perce, Yakama), coordinator for the Indigenous Ways of Knowing Program at Lewis & Clark Graduate School. The curricula consultant is ChiXapkaid (Dr. Michael Pavel, Skokomish), Sapsik'walá (Teacher) Education Project Director, College of Education at the University of Oregon.

Minahan provided Grand Ronde input at the summit. She was one of many Tribal educators presenting the Grand Ronde experience in creating a fourth-grade curriculum.

She described part of Grand Ronde's experience with lesson feedback forms from teachers, journal writing from students, and providing flash drives and teacher binders for PowerPoint presentations.

Both curricula will give Oregon students "historically accurate and culturally relevant information about Oregon Tribes," she said.

Matt Bucknell, K-5 Elementary School lead, said that educational outings teach about "the many kinds of learning."

For Kathy Cole, Cultural Education and Outreach manager, lessons include history, specifically pre-Termination, Restoration and sovereignty, as well as Grand

Ronde culture, specifically language, fishing and hunting, and Native plants.

Jan Looking Wolf Reibach, Land and Culture Department manager, said that Grand Ronde invites members of the Tribe and Elders to visit classrooms in session, and schedules field trips to the Tribe's facilities and plankhouse "for a visual perspective."

Tribal Historian David Lewis described the Tribe's efforts putting together exhibits and outreach that explain Tribal culture and history.

"It's important to listen compassionately," he said.

Because Indian histories were never written down, written histories are new in Indian culture, he said.

Work is now under way at the Tribal museum, Chachalu, that has been part of the Reservation plan since 1985.

"Children must feel safe as a base for learning," said Wren Christopher, a second-grade teacher in the Scappoose School District.

"We look at Grand Ronde as a circle where all play a role," said Reibach.

"The Tribal community," said Curriculum Consultant ChiXapkaid, "is the only place to get the Native story."

The indigenous historical framework draws on the teaching style of indigenous Tree people, teaching from the growth of tree rings, he said.

At the core of the tree is heart wood, and at the core of Tribal knowledge is ancestral teachings and sovereignty. Native people learn from this age-old way of understanding, according to a summary of the project. It gives students a sense of who they are and where they come from. As the tree rings grow outward, they are represented by state-Tribe relationships, student and family relationships, community and wider society supporters, and advocacy.

Culture Committee member Marcus Gibbons asked about the role that spirituality plays in Native American education.

"There are powerful lessons in trying to see the world in a differ-

ent way," said Robin Butterfield, program supervisor in the Office of Native Education in Washington state. Before the Oregon effort, the state of Washington completed its Native American curricula, "Since Time Immemorial: Tribal Sovereignty in Washington State."

"We're teaching from a head/heart/hands principle," she said. "Teachers and students are co-responsible to look beyond their selves."

"We're becoming sophisticated because we're reaching back to our ancestors," said ChiXapkaid.

"The inclusion of a Tribal history curriculum in public schools is an important part of helping our communities understand who we are, where we come from and what we have endured," said Reibach. "As Native people, we understand that their children are ours and our children are theirs. We are all related. When you are stronger, we are stronger."

Oregon's Social Sciences Academic Content Standards include criteria specific to Oregon Tribes and school districts are looking for historically accurate and culturally relevant curricula that meets state standards, said Campbell.

"The Oregon Tribal Histories and Sovereignty Curriculum Design project provides an opportunity for Native communities to design curricula and to meet those needs," she said. "Additionally, infusing culturally responsive curricula and pedagogy in classrooms enhances student learning environments and improves student performance. The work occurring through this project will assist the Oregon Department of Education's efforts in closing the opportunity gap for AI/NA students. I look forward to seeing this monumental project process."

"This is a great showcase for Indian education," said Rebecca Dobkins, assistant professor of Anthropology at Willamette University and faculty curator of Native American Art at the Hallie Ford Museum of Art in Salem.

The project is funded with a \$50,000 grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and \$40,000 from the Meyer Memorial Trust. ■

Saying goodbye



Photo by Michelle Alaimo

Terri White is gifted a Tribal Pendleton blanket by Joani Dugger, left, Grand Ronde Tribal Housing Authority executive assistant, and Shonn Leno, GRTHA interim executive director, during her retirement party at the GRTHA office on Tuesday, Dec. 17. White retired as the Tribe's full-charge bookkeeper for the Housing Authority after 16 years of service.



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