

Tribe hosts History Conference

Event attracts more than 200 participants to Chachalu

By Ron Karten

Smoke Signals staff writer

The second annual Tribal History Conference started with an audience of less than 100, but before the first session ended the audience had grown to more than 200 in the great hall at Chachalu Museum and Cultural Center.

Tribal Historian David Lewis served as master of ceremonies and principal organizer of the conference.

In the morning on Friday, Nov. 14, introductions from Lewis, an invocation and introduction by Tribal Council member Jon A. George and a welcome from the Grand Ronde drum opened the all-day event.

"The conference has become a must-attend event for many people working in heritage in Oregon," Lewis said. "There are few events like the conference that offer such a powerful array of scholars working in different disciplines, presenting in the same location.

"We had the most respected scholars in their fields at the conference, which attests to the great work we have been doing to address the Tribe's culture, language and history.

"Our work for many years has engendered a certain amount of respect for the Tribe from the academic heritage community and this is culminating in great appreciation for our new museum."

Grand Ronde Tribal history is "a connection to our past," said Cultural Protection Manager David Harrelson as he introduced speakers for the initial session.

First up was Kenneth Ames, professor emeritus in the Department of Anthropology at Portland State University. He described how archaeologists perform their work with examples of the tracking of obsidian, dentalia and other artifacts found throughout Oregon and the Pacific Northwest.

Mark Tveskov, professor of Anthropology at Southern Oregon University in Ashland, described the history and archaeology of the three-day Hungry Hill Battle that occurred in 1856 and was part of the Rogue River Wars.

David Brauner, professor of Anthropology at Oregon State University in Corvallis, discussed Fort Yamhill during the years 1856-67. The establishment of the Grand Ronde Reservation, he said, brought with it Fort Yamhill and other facilities designed to hold Native peoples, and when they signed out to visit relatives, for example, to track them.

A section on language and education started with Tribal linguistic consultant Henry Zenk, who discussed the biography of Louis Kenoyer (1867-1937) that he is working on with linguist Judd Shrock.

Kenoyer is thought to be the last



Photo by Michelle Alaimo

Jordan Mercier, Tribal Cultural Protection coordinator, talks about his personal experience as a Grand Ronde Tribal member during the second annual Tribal History Conference held at Chachalu Tribal Museum & Cultural Center on Friday, Nov. 14.

person to speak Atfalati, a name for the group of languages spoken by Yamhill and Tualatin Tribes. Kenoyer's phonetically written story of growing up in Grand Ronde and attending Chemawa Indian School was first transliterated by anthropologist Melville Jacobs (1902-71). Zenk and Shrock are working from Jacobs' initial efforts. Zenk also talked about details still needing further study.

Shrock said about working on the translation that he was simplifying big "walls" of text and deducing meaning.

Paul McCartney, a retired high school teacher, described the process of putting together a Kalapuya dictionary with all dialects represented. One discovery made during the effort was the Kalapuyan's sense of humor, translating, for example, "ear" as "side of the head."

Word connections that hold ideas together are also of interest, McCartney said.

Cultural Education and Outreach Program Manager Kathy Cole introduced the Chinuk Wawa application that is currently set up for Apple users. Next year, she anticipates that an Android version will be ready.

Jean Barman, professor emeritus in the History Department at the University of British Columbia in Canada, described reasons that fur trappers ventured south into what is now Washington and Oregon. Among the reasons were the chance to give their families a better life, a sense of belonging and the thought that they could contribute to the betterment of their new communities.

Barman's talk was precipitated by her book, "French Canadians, Furs, and Indigenous Women in the Making of the Pacific Northwest," published in October. It covers the

19th century indigenous Canadian Metis people, who were French-Indians employed in the fur trade. French-Indians are half-French, half-Indian by heritage. Today, Metis is a term used for all part-Indians in Canada.

When they came to Grand Ronde, the Metis ultimately represented a quarter of some 400 then living here. A copy of the book is available in the Tribal library.

In the history section, Nora Pederson, adjunct professor of Anthropology at Western Oregon University in Monmouth, described changes when Europeans moved west. They misunderstood longtime Tribal connections to this land, she said.

Pederson also shed light on the diverse Tribal engagements with industrial agriculture, harvesting hops fields on one hand and owning mills on the other. Harvesting wapato and berries, hunting game and fishing, Tribal peoples traded goods on an industrial scale.

Dan Boxberger, department chair of the Anthropology Department at Western Washington University in Bellingham, focused on the Grand Ronde part in 19th century federal treaties. He has been working with the Tribe on this subject for the last decade.

Peoples - white and Indian - were different then, he said. Utmost good faith in white society referred to written contracts; not so in Indian communities, where ultimate good faith came in the form of oral traditions. As a result, Native oral agreements failed in the face of European-American written documents.

Of 22 treaties between white and Native communities at that time, only seven were ratified.

In 1851, the Willamette Valley Treaty Commission discussed

issues with Tribes that came up again and again. European Americans wanted to move Tribal peoples to the east of the Cascades while Indians, with their attachment to the land, demanded a guarantee that they could maintain their foods, land and resources.

Stephen Dow Beckham, professor emeritus of History at Lewis and Clark College, introduced one of the major players in the recording of Pacific Northwest ethnography: George Gibbs, who from 1849-61 was a man too little known despite his contributions.

"A bridesmaid," said Beckham, "but never a bride."

His wide-ranging interests, including oral traditions, penchant for portraiture, surveyor and geologist, dealings with Indian artifacts and countless other pursuits all added to the value of his work.

Tribal member Jordan Mercier, Cultural Protection coordinator, reflected on his personal experience as a member of the Tribe, telling his story in the traditional way by first describing his family going back many generations.

Referring to active Tribal members who brought about Restoration in 1983, Mercier wondered where he fits in this Tribal world and on this land. He also described his many Tribal experiences as both a member of the Tribe and his family.

Tribal member Jennifer O'Neal, archivist at the University of Oregon, explained the role of archives in ethnographic collections. She referred to the words of Vine Deloria Jr., a Native American author, theologian, historian and activist, saying that information in archives is necessary for Indian identity and Tribal sovereignty.

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