

Course focuses on 19th century landscape

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ology, is teaching students how to document and preserve Tribal cultural resources by working with Tribal staff and Tribal students.

The course is focused on the history and development of the 19th century reservation landscape and spotlights two historic period sites. Students are learning about a mid-1800s Indian agency camp and one of the Grand Ronde Tribal schools that was established in the early 1900s.

The five-week course, which began on June 29, offers students a chance to live in Grand Ronde through early August while working on the two dig sites.

Tribal Historic Preservation Program Manager David Harrelson and Senior Archaeologist Briece Edwards are collaborating with Dr. Sara Gonzalez of the University of Washington to teach the course.

Students have focused on gaining a comprehensive understanding of Tribal historic preservation and learning archaeological and ethnographic field methods that include pedestrian and geophysical surveying, mapping, excavation, historic materials analysis, digital storytelling and Tribal community-based research methods.

"We wanted to work with somebody who wanted to help us better understand the archaeology of the historic period of the reservation," says Harrelson. "The idea of archaeology is there are all these lines of evidence to our history and our past. What archaeology brings to the table is not a story written by the victors, but the actual material evidence left behind that can fill in the gaps in history. We want to be able to tell the story of the people who came to the Grand Ronde Reservation. We saw this need."

Harrelson and Edwards say there is a desire to have this type of information to help educate the membership and people who visit the Tribal museum and cultural center – Chachalu.

"There is a need for additional information about the time period from the settlement of the Grand Ronde Indian Reservation up until Termination," says Harrelson. "This is an era of history that we don't have living people to tell us about those days and so the material evidence by archaeology can help with that."

Harrelson says it was the need to fill in those gaps in history in a more tangible way that led to the idea of a professional collaboration and a field school.

Harrelson and Edwards have been developing an ongoing relationship with Gonzalez because she has worked with Tribal communities before and she also has developed a culturally sensitive approach to archaeology. All three agree that archaeology as a whole is undergoing long-needed changes in not only philosophy, but methodology.

"Sara is very much about how do you decolonize a tool that has been used for oppression," says Edwards.



Photo by Michelle Alaimo

Tribal member Sharrah McKenzie removes a layer of earth while taking part in an archaeological dig at a site on Grand Ronde Road on Friday, July 17. McKenzie is a senior archaeology student at Portland State University.

Sharrah McKenzie 'feels like home'

When Tribal Historic Preservation Program Manager David Harrelson and Senior Archaeologist Briece Edwards heard there was a Tribal member majoring in archaeology at Portland State University, they had to meet her.

Harrelson and Edwards wanted Sharrah McKenzie to know who they were and what they were doing on the Reservation, so they sought her out and brought her to Grand Ronde to show her around.

Connecting McKenzie to her homelands and her Tribal community might have turned out to be the best part of the experience for McKenzie.

"Even though I'm a Tribal member, I don't have that much experience being here in the community," says McKenzie. "They (Harrelson and Edwards) were talking about how there was this opportunity to not only be involved in archaeology because I'm a senior at PSU, but also there was an opportunity to learn more about my community and where I came from. So, I thought this was a great opportunity."

McKenzie says she knew she

wanted more experience in the field of archaeology.

"I want to gain more skills and learn more about the different field methods before I graduate," says McKenzie. "And I'm definitely interested in learning more about my community and my Tribe, and the people who live here."

At the dig site, McKenzie was motivated to be part of the field school opportunity and said so.

"Actually getting in the field and getting my hands on is really awesome," says McKenzie. "It's exciting to be out here. I just love learning more and more."

She says the landscape was inspiring.

"Not a bad view every day," says McKenzie as she turns to Spirit Mountain. "Getting to come out here and do indigenous archaeology is really interesting because it's something I have never done before. Coming here made me feel a lot more comfortable identity-wise. Before this I was more of an outsider. I found I actually fit with this. It actually feels like home a little bit." ■

"That has led to a good and growing relationship over the years with Sara. We had some needs so we talked to her and she had some needs because she wrapped up her previous work, and this is an opportunity for her to continue looking at methodologies that can minimize that intrusiveness and still get you the same understanding."

Gonzalez, who received her doctorate from the University of California at Berkeley in 2011, was recently hired at the University of Washington as an assistant professor of anthropology in the Anthropology Department. Her expertise is indigenous archaeology done by and for Native communities.

"Working with Native communities is something that is increasing and becoming increasingly important across the United States and

Canada," says Gonzalez. "This kind of work takes a village to do it."

Gonzalez has previously worked with two California Tribes – the Kashia Band of Pomo Indians and the Amah Mutsun Band of Ohlone.

"My work brings together anthropological, historical, feminist and indigenous methods in the study and representation of Native American colonial heritage," says Gonzalez. "Community-based participatory research with both the Tribal community and the California Department of Parks and Recreation has been used to create archaeology that works for the Tribal community. It is conducted in accordance with their cultural values and that empowers them in the management and representation of their cultural heritage."

Harrelson and Edwards say they

wanted to partner with Gonzales because of her background and experience, but Harrelson asked Gonzalez why she wanted to continue her specialty work here in Grand Ronde.

"It really depends on having mutual respect and trust and a relationship that is ongoing and a relationship that you can see will develop further," says Gonzalez. "All those things really came together in this case. It's a place where I feel comfortable doing work. I feel like we are building a trusting relationship and I can bring students here and create a really unique educational environment that is a comfortable environment for students so that they can learn."

For Gonzalez, the distance between Seattle and Grand Ronde is negated by the opportunity. She says she wants students to come away from the field school with a truer understanding of what archaeology is, what it can be and what it should be.

Gonzalez says she also wants her students to understand what Tribal history is and what its importance and relevance is for their daily lives.

"Most students are surrounded by Native history," says Gonzalez. "In this context they are able to learn that history and understand its deep relevance to people today. Our hope is that they have a larger understanding of what's going on here."

Gonzalez says the field school is the first step in becoming an archaeologist and she wants to produce archaeologists who get it.

"I expect all the students who come through this program will understand the importance of working in a respectful and collaborative manner with Tribes," says Gonzalez. "This is the future of what I see in archaeology. As little as 10 or 15 years ago this type of thing was unheard of. There is a difference between telling someone what their history is and listening to what their history is and working with them to further contribute to it. These students are really the future in creating that change."

Edwards says the field school will focus on recovering information about one of the largest unseen elements in history – Native children.

"We are working at the old grade school location," says Edwards of the dig site just north of the intersection of Highway 22/Hebo Road and Grand Ronde Road. "Grand Ronde has a long history of schools. Education has been a long element here. We want to be able to shed some light on this because children are the continuity through time. Here is an opportunity to take from the past and bring it into the future."

Harrelson says working at the old school site can help the community gain a greater understanding of the area.

"The question is, 'Are there sub-surface deposits of material

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