

Native voice joins Fort Yamhill State Park staff

By Brent Merrill

Smoke Signals staff writer

Grand Ronde Tribal member Harris Reibach has been hired as a seasonal park ranger assistant at Fort Yamhill State Park in Grand Ronde, bringing a Tribal voice to the former U.S. Army outpost originally built to keep Tribal ancestors in check.

According to Park Ranger Matt Huerter, Reibach is the first Grand Ronde Tribal member ever to work at Fort Yamhill as a park ranger assistant.

"It's important for the community and us," said Huerter. "It's a neat opportunity. We haven't had that before."

Reibach, who married Teal Anderson on June 20, had been working for his parents Jan and Tawnya Reibach and their Strong Horse Construction Co. when his father told him about a job with the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department that he had seen advertised in *Smoke Signals*.

"I filled out an application online and I told them about all the skills I had and all the things that I have done," said Reibach, 26. "I was so persistent in getting this job. I called several times."

Huerter said Reibach made a strong first impression and has followed up on that since he has been hired.

"Harris' attitude and enthusiasm from the very beginning set him apart from all the other applicants," said Huerter. "That attitude has continued and he has brought that to work with him every day. It impacts my life because I want to have a good day and I want to treat other people positively. He brings quite a bit of respect for other people. It has been a huge joy to work with him. I'm excited to continue to work with him throughout the season."

Reibach, who graduated from Willamina High School and Western Oregon University in Monmouth, was interviewed at Willamette Mission State Park in Gervais.

Reibach first spoke with Huerter at Fort Yamhill and then Dennis Lucas, the park ranger for the Willamette Mission Management Unit.

"His experience is what I was looking for. Harris' knowledge of the area is really, really good," said Lucas, who has worked for Oregon State Parks for 30 years. "His enthusiasm and excitement, and his personality really stood out to me."

Huerter couldn't agree more with Lucas when it comes to Reibach's personality and how that benefits the park.

"He has amazing interpersonal skills," said Huerter. "He makes people feel welcome, he shares his enthusiasm and people just feel comfortable. He's a good host."

Reibach said it took about a month to finally get everything in place after receiving the job offer and that he had to fill out a mountain of paperwork.

In preparation for the job, Reibach took 15 online exams on topics ranging from what to do if he witnessed child abuse on park grounds, to using chemicals, to ap-



Photo by Michelle Alaimo

Tribal member Harris Reibach is the new seasonal park ranger assistant at Fort Yamhill State Heritage Area in Grand Ronde.

proaching wild animals, to backing up trucks and using power tools.

"I was so stoked," said Reibach. "I was dancing around crow hopping you know."

Reibach will be responsible for overall park maintenance and upkeep, and he will be conducting tours for park visitors.

"The thing that stood out the most when I first met him was his smile," said Lucas. "That's what I want our visitors to see. Historical knowledge is really important for that location. His knowledge of what's going on in the community is important and a lot of people wouldn't have that knowledge. That is why he was picked. Job fit is very important."

Huerter has been impressed with Reibach's work ethic since he has been working at the park.

"He carries through with things from the beginning to the end. He will start a project, get everything he needs together, get organized and he will complete the project just the way I instructed," said Huerter. "When he is done, he wraps everything up and puts everything away and it just shows some maturity and responsibility and care for the job and for the site."

Reibach said he is proud of his Native heritage and couldn't be happier that knowledge of his Tribe's history will benefit him on the job now and possibly in the years ahead.

"They (Huerter and Lucas) told me I was the perfect candidate because of my personal connection to Fort Yamhill and the community around it," said Reibach. "I find myself sharing things with park visitors that I guarantee no other park ranger would be saying. I love communicating and that is what is awesome for me and why this is such a cool job."

Huerter said he feels comfortable having Reibach meeting and greeting visitors to the park.

"Every time we have visitors come to the park and he has been outside he just lights up and welcomes them to the site," said Huerter. "I was really thrilled to get someone local and to have a Tribal member is even better. Someone that is educated and knows the history from the Tribe's perspective is something we haven't been able to offer in the

past. So this is a really exciting opportunity for us to be able to deliver that message in person. We have it on our storyboards but to actually have it from a Tribal person is more powerful."

According to the Oregon State Parks Foundation, Fort Yamhill was established in the 1850s to control the eastern border of the Grand Ronde Agency Reservation. Development of the current park was done in collaboration with the Confederated Tribes of Grand

Ronde and is promoted by State Parks as a "shared vision."

The foundation secured initial funding for the first phase of the restoration and preservation of the park that included archaeological investigations and restoration of the officer's quarters. The officer's building was the only remaining structure on the site and is believed to be where then-1st Lt. Phil Sheridan lived from 1857 to 1861.

Future planned work will include a new visitor's center, ghost structures showing the location of other structures and replication of the block house that was once on the property.

Park officials will protect and identify archaeological features making Fort Yamhill the state's first archaeological state park.

"I feel so in tune here," said Reibach. "I've been here for so long and that history is something that makes me proud. That is what's cool about working up there is that I get to use all that. If I was working someplace else, they could probably care less what I know about Chief Joseph Shangretta."


Lucas said he is happy with his decision to hire Reibach.

"I would rank him pretty high," said Lucas. "His enthusiasm is second to none and that is important to me." ■

Royalty seeking past members

Previous Grand Ronde Royalty queens and princesses are being sought as the current Royalty Court is compiling a picture and biography collection of current and past Royalty for the Chachalu Museum & Cultural Center, 8720 Grand Ronde Road.

Contact Chelsea Clark at 503-879-1418 or through e-mail at chelsea.clark@grandronde.org. Letters can be sent to 9615 Grand Ronde Road, Grand Ronde, OR. 97347. ■




Mental Health First Aid

Sometimes first aid isn't a bandage or CPR or calling 911—Sometimes, First Aid is YOU!

Someone you know could be experiencing a mental health crisis. You can help them.

Mental Health First Aid teaches you about the common warning signs and risk factors for mental health, suicidality and substance use that are common among youth (ages 12-25 years) and adults and the resources for helping someone who may be struggling or in crisis.

Whether you are a first responder, teacher, faith community leader, human resources professional, parent, employer, employee, coworker, or some other caring community member, this 8-hour certification course has information you can use.



Sometimes, the best first aid is you.

Youth Mental Health First Aid

Date: Friday, August 14, 2015

Time: 8:30 AM to 5:00 PM

Online registration: <http://conta.cc/1R2OXTH>


Location: Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde
Adult Education Building, Classroom 126
9615 Grand Ronde Road
Grand Ronde, OR 97347

OFNS is approved by the Oregon Health Authority to provide Continuing Education Units to all traditional health workers (Community Health Workers, Personal Health Navigators, Doulas, Peer Support Specialists, and Peer Wellness Specialists).
This OFNS training is approved for 8 continuing education hours.

How to register:


Follow the link to register online;
or
Contact Victoria at:
victoriah@ofsn.net
503-709-1366
(Please give your full name, email, city, zip code, and phone number)

Limited to 25 participants, register early!



ALGEE, the Mental Health First Aid Action Plan

- Assess the risk of suicide or harm
- Listen nonjudgmentally
- Give reassurance and information
- Encourage appropriate professional help
- Encourage self-help and other support strategies



Oregon Family Support Network