

# Chachalu is still under construction

**Expected completion of phase two is spring 2018**

**By Danielle Frost**

*Smoke Signals staff writer*

The fences may be coming down and the cedar plank siding is up, but eager visitors will need to wait awhile longer before visiting the expanded Chachalu Museum & Cultural Center.

Tribal Cultural Resources Department Manager David Harrelson said that since most work on the large exhibit hall and research room is complete and fencing was removed, it may look as if an opening date is imminent.

“There are more contractors coming in soon to work on the front entryway, so fencing will go back up,” he said. “But we’ll be open in spring 2018 when phase two construction is complete. There’s a lot of excitement in the community and it feels like closure is on the way.”

Judging from the number of inquiries received regarding community and educational tours, that finish line can’t come soon enough.

The project may be almost six years in the making, but the desire for the Tribe to have its own museum and cultural center dates back to before Restoration.

“This space has been called for, worked for and desired by the community and Elders, some who have passed on before seeing it completed,” Harrelson said. “It feels satisfying knowing we are on track to open.”

Julie Brown, Chachalu manager, said that when Restoration efforts were underway one of the top five priorities, especially for Elders, was having a museum.

“I was in my 20s at the time and I remember those meetings,” Brown said. “It was a very emotional time. The Elders wanted a place where they could tell our story. It was really clear that was very important to them.”

The property at 8720 Grand Ronde Road was purchased by the Tribe



Photos by Michelle Alaimo

**Carpet is installed in one of the offices in the newly renovated Chachalu Museum & Cultural Center on Wednesday, Nov. 1.**



**A research room is included in the newly renovated Chachalu Museum & Cultural Center.**

in 2011 for \$675,000. Before, it was home to Grand Ronde Elementary and then Willamina Middle School.

“The plan was always to develop it into a museum and cultural center, with a phased development approach,” Harrelson said.

Phase One, which was completed in 2014, included curatorial spaces, storage collections and a small exhibit hall in the front of the building.

Phase Two, currently under construction, includes a 5,000-square-foot exhibit hall, research room, classrooms, conference room, cultural demonstration areas and office spaces. On the building’s exterior, cedar planks have been added. The lumber, which comes from Willamette National Forest, was donated to the Tribe.

Expansion plans also call for a larger parking lot in front of the building along with a large vehicle turnaround and bus stop. These upgrades are important due to school groups that will visit the facility.

“We have already had requests,” Harrelson said. “We will be able to use it for this, but cannot accommodate large groups until Phase Three construction is complete.”

Phase Three will include a large community room to accommodate such groups, exterior landscaping and programming. Other potential ideas include an archives vault, amphitheater and playground.

“The community will still have the chance to give input before Phase Three begins,” Harrelson said. “That is what I think is exciting. There is still an opportunity even though construction is underway.”

Those who have business to conduct with the Cultural Resources Department in the interim can still do so: They just need to go to the back door until construction is complete.

“To me, the excitement of seeing an exhibit hall feels more like the project is on the way to an end,” Harrelson said. ■

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