

Collection pursued since 1999

**CHACHALU continued
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experience that will engage all who walk through our doors.”

Cultural Resources Department Manager David Harrelson said that the larger space will allow the Tribe to better tell its unique story.

“Before (phase two renovations began) we were able to say we had a museum. Now it will feel like we really have a museum,” he said. “It is not complete yet, but there is definitely a different feeling going from about 400 to 4,000 square feet of exhibit space.”

The property at 8720 Grand Ronde Road was purchased by the Tribe in 2011 for \$675,000. Before, it was home to Grand Ronde Elementary and Willamina Middle schools.

When it opens next month, a big part of telling that story will include an exhibit called “Rise of the Collectors,” featuring 16 items from the Summers Collection that were collected at Grand Ronde shortly after the Reservation was established. The objects are on loan from the British Museum after a decades long process to obtain them.

Tribal officials have had their eye on the Summers Collection since they first learned of its existence at the British Museum in the late 1990s. The London museum became a pilgrimage destination for those seeking to see and reconnect with belongings of their family and Tribe.

For instance, Tribal Council Chairwoman Cheryle A. Kennedy, then-Tribal Council Secretary June Sell-Sherer and two Cultural Resources staff members traveled to London in December 2002 to view the collection.

After almost 20 years of pursuing the collection’s return, Tribal staff were notified that the British Museum would approve a loan request. Requests for the return of the collection were not successful because it takes an act of Parliament for a full return of items.

In March, Tribal staff received direction from Tribal Council to secure the loan for an opening date at the end of May or beginning of June. Since then, Harrelson



Photos by Michelle Alaimo

Duane Romero, owner of Duane E. Romero Custom Builders, hangs cedar planks in the breezeway of Chachalu Tribal Museum & Cultural Center on Friday, May 4. Phase Two construction of Chachalu is near completion and an open house will take place on Friday, June 1.

said staff have been working diligently to put everything in place for receiving 16 objects from the museum, which includes exhibit and building preparation, shipping arrangements, publicity, and scheduling workshops and events.

Harrelson said the process is extremely detailed.

“We had to not only have the facility to make it possible, but also needed to have very specific policies and procedures in place,” he said. “The work that Veronica Montano (former Tribal Cultural Collections coordinator) did was significant. There is likely no institution in the world that wouldn’t loan to us now due to a lack of policy and procedures.”

Requesting a loan can be extremely time consuming and painstakingly detailed. In a December 2017 article in *Smoke Signals*, Montano recalled just how much time was involved.

“One of the reports took eight months to complete,” she said. “Then it needed to be viewed, revised and updated, and reviewed again.”

The collection contains artifacts, baskets, tools, pipes, bags and carvings, many of which are believed

to be originals from the first Tribal members who brought them to the Grand Ronde Reservation in the 1850s.

The Rev. Robert Summers, a McMinnville Episcopalian minister, collected and purchased several hundred items from the Tribe and other Tribes when he lived in Oregon during the 1870s. He was a naturalist as well as a minister and maintained a journal with detailed descriptions of each item, creating a record of each item’s history.

In addition to the Summers Collection loan, the open house will include guest speakers from the various Cultural Resources Department programs, food, a raffle and self-guided museum tours with staff on hand to answer questions.

Harrelson said he is expecting anywhere from 150 to 300 people to attend the open house, so he advises carpooling as parking will present challenges. A drop-off area will be available for those with mobility issues.

Planning has been in the works for a year.

“I am excited about the Cultural Resources staff having the opportunity to talk about what they do and how the programs look now,”

Harrelson said. “We began with one staff person in 1997 and now have 18, and there have been multiple different reorganizations ... This is a good opportunity to share this with the community.”

Programs within the department include historical preservation, collections/research room, cultural education and museum staff.

“Seeing all of the people who have contributed to this over the years is the thing of greatest value to me,” Harrelson said. “Seeing the fulfillment in people’s eyes is something that will be very rewarding.”

Cultural Resources has partnered with Oregon Public Broadcasting to air several 10-second radio spots promoting the museum and the “Rise of the Collectors” exhibit.

“I am excited because the name Grand Ronde will be on the radio,” Harrelson said.

Brown said she is looking forward to telling the Tribe’s story through the museum’s exhibits, classes and research and consultation projects.

“It’s been a long four years (of construction) and many amazing experiences,” she said. “I’m most looking forward to community engagement of our services and their support in helping us define future development.”

Phase One construction was complete in 2014 and included curatorial space, storage collections and a small exhibit hall in the front of the building.

Phase Two construction, which began in 2017, includes the large exhibit hall, research room, classrooms, conference room, cultural demonstration area and office spaces. Outside, a larger parking lot in front of the building, vehicle turnaround and bus stop have been added.

Phase Three construction will likely include renovation of the remaining school building area and exterior landscaping. Specific decisions have not been made yet.

The architect for the first two phases was Paul Bentley of Roseburg. A request for proposals for a third phase architect is in the works.

“The goal is to have drawings or a product from the architect that allows for us to put in a proposal in the 2019 budget,” Harrelson said. ■



Chachalu Tribal Museum & Cultural Center Phase Two construction includes a newly designed entryway to the building.