

# Veterans retire Marcellus Norwest eagle staff

By Danielle Frost  
Smoke Signals staff writer

The eagle staff belonging to the late Marcellus “Marce” Norwest will have a permanent home at the Tribe’s Chachalu Museum & Cultural Center.

On Thursday, July 12, a day when temperatures soared into the 90s, approximately 30 people attended the ceremony at the museum’s small entryway plankhouse, including several members of Norwest’s family, to retire the staff and parts of his regalia.

Norwest was a U.S. Army veteran who fought in the Korean War and one of the founding members of the Grand Ronde chapter of the Northwest Indian Veterans Association, and became a member of the West Valley Veterans Honor Guard.

He also was a driving force for construction of the West Valley Veterans Memorial and initiated the annual Veterans Powwow, which was renamed in Norwest’s honor after he walked on in 2011.

Cultural Education Specialist Brian Krehbiel, Cultural Advisor Bobby Mercier and Cultural Education Coordinator Jordan Mercier opened the ceremony with singing and drumming as the smell of sage filled the air.

Grand Ronde Honor Guard members Steve Bobb Sr., Raymond Petite, Rich VanAtta, Al Miller, Dennis Kleffner and Daniel Helfrich carried in the flags and the staff. The staff was then given to Cultural Center Specialist Jim



Photos by Michelle Alaimo  
Tribal Elder Marcella Selwyn, above, is gifted a pillow, after being gifted a Pendleton blanket, by Tribal Elder Susie Lash, right, and Veterans Special Event Board Chairman and Tribal Elder Steve Bobb Sr., background, during the retirement ceremony for the late Marcellus Norwest’s eagle staff, left, held at Chachalu Museum & Cultural Center on Thursday, July 12. Selwyn is Norwest’s sister. The staff will go on display at the museum in the future.

Holmes and Cultural Collections Specialist Nick LaBonte.

Bobby Mercier covered the staff with a white sheet and then addressed the crowd in Chinuk Wawa and then English.

“We’re thankful for the teachings that came with this (staff),” Mercier said. “We hope no one forgets where the powwow, staff and parts of his regalia came from. ... We are not so much retiring it as we are placing it where it will be held for our family. We are praying that we never forget those things and our children never forget.”

Holmes thanked the Norwest

family for their gift.

“It will be treasured and well taken care of here,” he said.

After the ceremony was complete, attendees went inside Chachalu to enjoy refreshments. Bobb, the Veterans Special Event Board chairman, gifted Tribal blankets and pillows to Norwest’s two sis-

ters, Marcella Selwyn and Marilee Norwest, as well as Bobby Mercier for conducting the ceremony.

“May you always be surrounded by love and warmth,” Bobb said. “Although you probably don’t need the blanket today.”

Bobb said the eagle staff was donated to him when Norwest was ill by Marcellus’ wife, Sharon, and the use of the staff dates back to 1986. However, the feathers have been deteriorating and the eagle staff was last used during the 2017 Veterans Powwow. Tribal Elder Deitz Peters created a new one that is now being used by veterans.

“Last year it made its last trip around,” Bobb said. “It needs to stand upright in the bag for a year, and now it has been retired to Chachalu. Things like this are extremely important to us as a people. ... It is important to be kept here with its spirit.”

Selwyn said she thought the ceremony was wonderful.

“I couldn’t wait for this day,” she said. “I am so overwhelmed, this really gets right to the heart. I’m really proud of my brother and that his staff will be here.”

Norwest echoed similar sentiments.

“I’m really proud of my brother and the boys for doing this for him,” she said. “It is really sweet.” ■



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**Where:** CTGR – Community Service Center 9615 Grand Ronde Road Grand Ronde, OR 97347  
**Who:** Parents and Caregivers of children under 5 years.  
**Why:** Come to play, have a snack and have fun!




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Flushing prescription drugs down the toilet puts aquatic life at risk. Salmon need clean water to survive, and these chemicals have harmful effects on behavior, growth, and reproduction. Dispose of drugs properly and keep salmon habitat healthy.

