

# Summit at

*Two-day event takes deep dive in to Grand Ronde history and culture*

By Danielle Frost

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The two-day Grand Ronde History & Culture Summit has become a popular annual event.

Approximately 250 participants immersed themselves in the Tribe's historical relationships and places and cultural practices during the sixth summit held Wednesday and Thursday, Oct. 24-25, in the Tribal gymnasium, Tribal plankhouse and Chachalu Museum & Cultural Center.

The summit began in 2013 as a means to help remedy the fact that the histories of Oregon's Tribes had not been properly documented and told by the peoples most affected by them.

This year's event included presentations and small group workshops from Tribal staff and other experts, focused on building and maintaining partnerships through projects to encourage cultural awareness of Native American people and places.

The summit opened with drumming and singing of "stankiya," which is one of the oldest names the Tribe has for coyote. Participants included Cultural Resources Manager David Harrelson, Cultural Advisor Bobby Mercier, Youth Prevention Manager Nicole Estrada-Hewitt, Cultural Education Specialist Flicka Lucero, Public Affairs Administrative Assistant Chelsea Clark, Cultural Education Coordinator Jordan Mercier, Chinuk Immersion Apprentice Santiago Atanacio, Interpretive Coordinator Travis Stewart, Recreation Specialist Harris Reibach, Cultural Education Specialist Brian Krehbiel, Cultural Protection Specialist Nicolas Atanacio, Tribal youth Nokoa Mercier and Prevention Coordinator Cristina Lara.

"Changes are being made here," Bobby Mercier said. "Our children will never know a day when these things didn't exist. ... It is good to



Photos by Timothy J. Gonzalez

**Professor Stephen Dow Beckham delivers the keynote address at the Grand Ronde History & Culture Summit held in the Tribal gym on Wednesday, Oct. 24. The summit continued Thursday at the gym and Chachalu Tribal Museum & Cultural Center.**

see so many Tribal people, government and schools represented."

Several Tribal Council members attended Wednesday's sessions, including Vice Chair Chris Mercier, Secretary Jon A. George, Lisa Leno, Kathleen George and Steve Bobb Sr. Past Tribal Council Chairwoman and key Restoration figure Kathryn Harrison attended both days.

This year, attendees had the opportunity to attend part of the summit at Chachalu Tribal Museum & Cultural Center, view the "Rise of the Collectors" exhibit that showcases 16 items from the Summers Collection and interact in smaller

groups with hands-on activities and discussions.

The keynote speaker Wednesday morning was noted Lewis and Clark College history and Indian Law instructor Stephen Dow Beckham. He has also served as an expert witness in many Tribal land-use cases.

His presentation gave an overview of those who collected more than 200 years' worth of language, culture and history of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde and its antecedent Tribes.

"Some of us, like me and many of you, are new arrivals in this land," he said. "But some of those new arrivals (in the 18th and early 19th centuries) had great curiosity and collected information on the Elders, which became legacies of the past."

For example, explorers, fur trappers, early settlers, government officials, linguists and anthropologists investigated and recorded detailed information on Oregon Tribes,

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Beckham said. Until recent times, much of this information was "captured heritage" and not accessible. Chachalu is in the process of compiling an extensive database.

Beckham discussed the detailed sketches of Native American baskets, digging sticks, canoes and the floor plan of a Chinookan lodge made by Meriwether Lewis and William Clark during their Corps of Discovery journey in the early 1800s. Although this information was obtained due to colonialism and manifest destiny, it has resulted in extensive information about Tribes that lived in the area at that time.

Charles Wilkes was an American naval officer, ship's captain and explorer. He led the U.S. Exploring Expedition from 1838-42, which included Puget Sound, the Columbia River, Fort Vancouver and Willamette Falls. At the falls, he documented Tribal fishing using dipnets, platforms and canoes.

George Gibbs was an ethnologist, naturalist and geologist who contributed to the study of the



**Cultural Advisor Bobby Mercier leads singing and drumming during the opening of the Grand Ronde History & Culture Summit held in the Tribal gym on Wednesday, Oct. 24.**