

‘We are after the truth’

**FISHERY continued
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harvest lamprey at the falls. State Lands Director Vicki Walker reaffirmed that decision on Nov. 26.

Beckham said the Native Americans of the Willamette Valley continued to fish at Willamette Falls even after removal to the Grand Ronde Reservation in the mid-1850s. He cited an 1880s photo taken at the falls that shows a Native American dipnetting.

“Native people had to return to the falls to survive,” Beckham said, citing the poor farmland in the Grand Ronde Valley. “It was a remarkable resource.”

Beckham called Columbia Plateau Tribes’ claims to the Willamette Falls fishery a “modern-day discovery of opportunity.”

“None of the Columbia Plateau Tribes ceded lands west of the Cascade Range,” the report says. “None of the Columbia Plateau Tribes identified ‘usual and accustomed grounds and stations’ for fishing at the falls in the 1942 Swindell report. None of the Columbia Plateau Tribes sought compensation in the U.S. Claims Court or Indian Claims Commission for lands in the Willamette Valley.”

However, Beckham said, an emergency accommodation by the Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife in the mid-1990s that allowed a spring salmon fishery at Willamette Falls by the four Columbia Inter-Tribal Fish Commission Tribes muddled the waters. The Grand Ronde Tribe, which was only 10 years into



Photo by Timothy J. Gonzalez

Cultural Resource Department Manager David Harrelson, Dr. Stephen Dow Beckham and Tribal Council Chairwoman Cheryle A. Kennedy attended the “Coffee and Conversation” event about the Willamette Falls fishery that was held before the General Council meeting held in the Community Center on Sunday, Dec. 2.

Restoration, was not consulted or informed about the agreement when it occurred.

Beckham said he and fellow ethnohistorian E. Richard Hart found no evidence in separate reports commissioned by the state Department of Justice that Willamette Falls was ever a “usual and accustomed grounds and stations” for eastern Oregon and eastern Washington Tribes.

“Restoration for Grand Ronde came at a high price,” Beckham said, referring to the consent decree which required the Tribe to sacrifice hunting and fishing rights in return for state support of the

1988 Reservation Plan. Since then, the Tribe has slowly recaptured ceremonial hunting and fishing rights, as well as completed and fished from the Willamette Falls platform.

Cultural Resources Department Manager David Harrelson said one

of the takeaways from Beckham’s report is that Tribal knowledge maintained in families, such as the traditional practice of exacting a tribute from visiting Tribes that fished at Willamette Falls, is buttressed by historical accounts.

Tribal Council Chairwoman Cheryle A. Kennedy thanked Beckham for his research. “We are after the truth,” she said.

Other Tribal Council members who attended included Lisa Leno, Denise Harvey, Kathleen George, Michael Langley, Secretary Jon A. George and Vice Chair Chris Mercier. Tribal staff who attended included Tribal Attorney Rob Greene, Chief of Staff Stacia Hernandez, General Manager David Fullerton and Deputy Press Secretary Sara Thompson.

The full report, which was submitted by the Grand Ronde Tribe to the State Lands Department and Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife, can be found at www.grandronde.org/about/archives/. ■

Amending constitution requires two-thirds majority of votes

**AMENDMENT continued
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14, 1999, and who meet pre-1999 constitutional enrollment requirements. Applicants also must meet the five-year relinquishment requirement if they have enrolled in another Tribe.

Tribal Council was encouraged to move the proposed amendment to a vote by a positive Sept. 8 advisory vote result. Tribal voters favored a similarly worded proposal 839 to 365, for a 69.7 percent majority. To amend the Tribal Constitution, two-thirds of those voting must approve of the change.

Only two proposed constitutional amendments have ever received sufficient yes votes to pass — the July 1999 enrollment requirements that created the current split siblings situation and the February 2008 proposal to increase the relinquishment period from one to five years.

Other constitutional amendment proposals have either failed to garner the two-thirds majority mandated by the Tribal Constitution or have been defeated.

Since the election is being run by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Tribal members will have to specially register to vote in the election. Being registered to vote in regular Tribal elections is not sufficient.

Registration packets are scheduled to be mailed on Dec. 31 and start arriving in Tribal members’

mail the first week of January. Tribal members will have until Jan. 25 to register to vote in the election and ballots are scheduled to be mailed on Feb. 1.

Two-thirds of those who vote will have to approve for the amendment to pass, as well as 30 percent of those who registered must cast a ballot for the election to count.

In the last three constitutional amendment elections held in 2016, 2015 and 2012, an average of 1,248 Tribal members have registered to vote in BIA-run elections, but the turnout has only averaged 61.3 percent.

As of the September Tribal Council election, more than 4,150 Tribal members were 18 or older, making them eligible to vote in a Tribal election.

In the run-up to the election, Tribal Council has scheduled four educational sessions: 5:30 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 16, in Grand Ronde; 5:30 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 30, in a Portland location yet to be announced; 5:30 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 13, in a Eugene location yet to be announced; and again in Grand Ronde at 5:30 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 20.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs continues to run Tribal constitutional amendment elections because a proposal to remove the federal government from the process was defeated in March 2015 by a vote of 381 to 230. ■

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