

‘Words cannot be put into this’

TOMANOWOS continued from front page

erties. It is a great, great thing to have this piece back. The story of Tomanowos is a story of hardship, endurance, survival and victory. From the heart and soul of the Grand Ronde people, we give sincere thanks and gratitude to have this piece back.”

The ceremony opened with singing and drumming by Cultural Advisor Bobby Mercier, Cultural Protection Specialist Chris Bailey, Historic Preservation Technician Nic Atanacio, Interpretive Coordinator Travis Stewart and Cultural Collections Specialist Nick Labonte.

“We chose the song, ‘Traveling With Our Ancestors,’ after thinking about this meteorite and what it has been through to come back home,” Mercier said.

Evergreen Museum Interim Executive Director John Rasmussen said that although meteorites have “great significant value” to the museum, the cultural value to the Tribe outweighs it.

“This is a significant day for us,” Rasmussen said. “This piece of the meteorite has special meaning to our friends in Grand Ronde.”

Kennedy and Tribal Council member Steve Bobb Sr. gifted museum officials with beaded necklaces to thank them for the return of a piece of Tomanowos.

“Words cannot be put into this,” Kennedy said. “Meteorites contain answers to the universe. We are a spiritual people and believe this came from Creator.”

The piece became part of Evergreen’s collection in 2006 after being purchased at auction by Yamhill County resident Del Smith,

Tomanowos timeline:

Billions of years ago: Scientists believe Tomanowos was the iron core of a planetesimal that was shattered in a stellar collision.

More than 10,000 years ago: Tomanowos falls from the sky. The Bretz Floods eventually transports Tomanowos to a spot near the falls of Willamette River.

10,000 years ago to 19th century: Tomanowos’ resting place becomes a sacred site for western Oregon Indian Tribes, particularly the Clackamas Chinooks, who believe it was sent to Earth by the Sky People.

1850s: The Clackamas Chinooks, along with more than 25 other Tribes from western Oregon, are relocated to the Grand Ronde Reservation, separating them from the sacred site.

1902: Tomanowos is found by part-time miner Ellis Hughes, who removes it from ceded Tribal land that then belonged to Oregon Iron and Steel Co.

1902-05: The miner charges 25 cents for people to view Tomanowos.

1905: By judicial order, Tomanowos returns to Oregon Iron and Steel.

1906: New York philanthropist Mrs. William Dodge buys Tomanowos for \$20,600 and donates it to the American Museum of Natural History in NYC.

1999: The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, citing the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, seeks return of Tomanowos. The museum counters, asking a judge to declare it Tomanowos’ owner.

2000: The Tribe and museum reach an accord that keeps Tomanowos in New York City and provides annual ceremonial access to Tribal members, as well as acknowledgement of the meteorite’s religious importance.

2006: Willamette University repatriates 2.2 pound fragment of Tomanowos to Grand Ronde Tribe.

2019: Evergreen Aviation & Space Museum repatriates 4.5 ounce slice of Tomanowos to Grand Ronde Tribe.

founder of Evergreen Aviation & Space Museum. Before Smith purchased the fragment, it was part of the Macovich Collection in New

York City. The first piece of Tomanowos to come back home was a 2.2 pound fragment repatriated by Willa-

mette University in April 2006. According to Grand Ronde Deputy Press Secretary Sara Thompson, it is estimated that 100 fragments of Tomanowos exist in private and institutional collections.

Tomanowos the traveler

Tomanowos fell from the sky more than 10,000 years ago and came to rest in what is now West Linn by way of the Bretz Floods. Clackamas Chinook Tribal peoples, who lived in the area, believed the meteorite was invested with divine properties and frequently visited it for ceremonial purposes.

In 1906, a New York philanthropist purchased Tomanowos for \$20,600 and shipped the 31,000-pound meteorite by train to New York City, where it was donated to the American Museum of Natural History, where it still resides 113 years later.

In November 1999, the Grand Ronde Tribe filed a claim for the meteorite, citing the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990. In 2000, the Tribe and museum reached an agreement that keeps Tomanowos in New York City and allows annual ceremonial access to Grand Ronde Tribal members.

In 2012, a slice of Tomanowos was auctioned off for \$2,000 in New York City by meteorite collector Darryl Pitt. He obtained his pieces of the meteorite in 1998 when he traded the American Museum of Natural History for a half-ounce piece of a meteorite from Mars. The trade occurred before the Tribe staked a claim to Tomanowos.

The Tribe is currently planning an exhibit, “Witness,” about Tomanowos at its Chachalu Museum & Cultural Center, scheduled to open in spring 2019. ■



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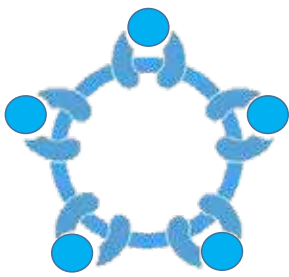
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