

# ‘The Tribe has helped me every step of the way’

BUSINESS continued  
from front page

five part-time employees.

Douglass says he saw a need for the business after witnessing different ways Hawaiian youth and young adults showed their culture.

With his own mixed heritage, which includes Native American and Pacific Islander, he and his business partner, who is half-Filipino and half-white, decided to call their budding business Cultural Blends.

“We wanted to use the brand to serve the people of Hawaii and give it a streetwear feel,” Douglass says. “We created a batch of T-shirts and sold \$900 worth in the school cafeteria. After that I just ran with the idea.”

To make his clothing different, Douglass learned how to sew watching YouTube videos and created shirts with silk pockets, which proved to be quite popular among the students at the University of Hawaii.

“From there it just grew and we opened up an online store and started selling there and through Facebook,” he says.

After graduating in 2012 with a bachelor’s degree in communications, Douglass decided it was time to return to his Oregon roots.

He decided to celebrate that by designing a T-shirt that reads “The Best Coast,” featuring the state license plates of Washington, Oregon and California.

“I didn’t want to focus on a Portland brand, but wanted a bigger demographic,” he says. “I wanted to emphasize the commonalities that bring us closer together. People tend to forget the West Coast isn’t just California.”

The shirt design proved to be a hit and received an even bigger boost when former NBA player and Seattle native Nate Robinson began wearing it.

Then, in an attempt to increase sales in the holiday season of 2015,



Photo by Timothy J. Gonzalez

Grand Ronde Tribal member Troy Douglass has opened his own clothing store, Cultural Blends, in the Lloyd Center Mall.

## If you shop

### Cultural Blends

**Where:** Lloyd Center Mall, 2201 Lloyd Center, Portland.

**Hours:** 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday through Saturday, and 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Sunday.

**Other options:** The website is [www.culturalblends.net](http://www.culturalblends.net), e-mail [info@culturalblends.net](mailto:info@culturalblends.net) or under “Cultural Blends” on Instagram.

**Phone:** 503-572-9757

Douglass Photoshopped famed rapper Snoop Dogg wearing one of his shirts and posted it to Instagram, asking followers to like and comment with their favorite Snoop Dogg song. The rapper heard about it and reposted it himself, which turned out to be his most shared photo of the year.

“That’s a whole crazy story itself,” Douglass says. “We ended up selling \$10,000 worth of shirts.”

Another popular seller is the

trucker hat in Portland Trail Blazers’ colors that says “1977” on it, which is a reference to when the team won its only NBA championship.

A friend of Douglass’s stood in line for three hours at a Lillard autograph signing to give him a hat and asked if he’d wear it.

As luck would have it, the timing was right and soon after Lillard had a photo on social media of himself wearing the hat after the team won a crucial game in the 2014 playoffs.

“We ended up selling 350 hats that day and he followed me on Twitter,” Douglass says.

During the next few years, Douglass continued to evolve his brand and focused on products with multiple elements of different cultures.

“It works well and I always want to include the different cultures and blend them into hip-hop fashion,” he says. “My line has a real ‘90s vibe and focuses on what brings us all together.”

In November 2018, Lloyd Center began a promotion featuring small “pop-up”-style businesses for the holiday season. Cultural Blends proved to be so popular that the mall management asked them to open a store within the mall.

Using a grant from Native American Youth and Family Center in Portland, Douglass paid the lease for a storefront. Sales have remained steady after the holidays, even with the traditional dip in retail sales in January and February.

“I want to continue growing this

and wouldn’t be surprised if I get a brick-and-mortar, stand-alone store soon,” he says. “We have our products in 63 stores and I want to increase that.”

His storefront carries the Cultural Blends items such as shorts, T-shirts, jackets, tank tops, jewelry, hats, coffee cups, air fresheners and water bottles. There are also other local and native brands, Skyn Style. Since it is a large display area, Douglass also features another local business in his store, Fallen Legends, which includes vintage Trail Blazers basketball attire and accessories.

Douglass has shared his story of success at NAYA events and hopes to encourage Native youths to pursue their dreams, even if it makes them uncomfortable or they are unsure of how to do it.

“I get up and tell them my story, and hope it inspires the kids to try this and utilize social media to build their business,” he says. “You have to be as scrappy and creative as possible and don’t take ‘No’ for an answer.”

Douglass thanks the Grand Ronde Tribe for helping him to achieve his goals and get in touch with his Native roots.

“The Tribe has helped me every step of the way by paying for college and now I am getting in touch with my culture,” he says. “I didn’t really grow up learning much about it, but now I am taking the Lifeways classes at the Portland office and learning a lot. Lisa Achuleta (Portland Tribal Services representative) is like my second mom.” ■

## Police Department has non-emergency text line

The Grand Ronde Tribal Police Department has created a non-emergency text line at 541-921-2927.

“Even though this is mostly designed for children, I don’t want adults thinking that they can’t use it as well. If you have a non-emergency situation or question, feel free to contact my officer via text through this line,” said Grand Ronde Tribal Police Chief Jake McKnight. “When one of my officers receives the text, they will call you back when they have time.”

McKnight said that emergency situations still require calling 911.

For more information, contact McKnight at 503-879-1474. ■

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