

Much of the Umatilla report is ‘fact-free history’

FALLS continued from front page

fished at the falls and supported the Grand Ronde Tribe’s claims to Willamette Falls.

He called Columbia Plateau Tribes’ claims to the Willamette Falls fishery a “modern-day discovery of opportunity” in 2018.

In a March 11 letter, Tribal Council Chairwoman Cheryle A. Kennedy said that since the Grand Ronde Tribe’s Restoration in 1983, it has not only had to confront a legacy of colonialism and racism, but “regrettably, we have also had to resist the efforts of some Tribes to move beyond their lands and deprive Grand Ronde of its rights and history.”

Kennedy met with Oregon Gov. Kate Brown in a Tribal Government Willamette Falls executive session meeting on Thursday, March 18.

“Much of the Umatilla Report is ‘fact-free history’” Beckham says. “A close analysis of the sources cited confirms the author glossed her narrative from unreliable secondary sources, failed to check the primary sources alleged to be the foundation for the information, and accepted as fact information that was wrong or of dubious authenticity.”

The author, Dr. Jennifer Karson Engum, works for the Umatilla Tribe’s Cultural Resources Protection Program. She earned a Ph.D. in anthropology in 2007 from the University of Texas at Austin, according to her LinkedIn profile.

In his summary, Beckham rebukes six major claims made by the Umatilla report.

1. “Use of Willamette Falls area was not exclusive to any single Tribe or band.” Beckham says the



Smoke Signals file photo

The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde commissioned noted Oregon historian Stephen Dow Beckham to write an analysis of an Umatilla Tribal document regarding the Willamette Falls fishery. Beckham’s analysis once again rebuts claims by Columbia Plateau Tribes of their regular historical usage of Willamette Falls as a fishery.

statement is false and does not address the “extensive” linguistic and ethno-historical information recorded since 1806 that identifies the falls and its vicinity as the aboriginal homeland of the Clackamas, Clowewalla, Multnomah, Tualatin and Molalla Tribes. “The Umatilla Report fails to provide any evidence that its antecedent Tribes and bands possessed a single village or exercised any subsistence activities west of Celilo Falls prior to 1995.”

2. “(Umatilla) members maintained uninterrupted use and exercised treaty rights in the area which use continues today.” Beckham calls the statement false and cites the fact that in 1941 none of 35 Umatilla Tribal Elders reported any use or exercise of treaty rights west of Celilo Falls on the Columbia River. He also cites a 2015 Umatilla-published atlas

that did not identify any resource uses or locations west of Celilo Falls.

3. “The (Umatilla) possess abundant oral histories on our traditional use at Willamette Falls and the Lower Columbia River area.” Beckham again does not mince words, calling the statement false and “based on heavily redacted modern oral histories.” He also cites the fact that the Umatilla sought no settlement from the U.S. government for any land other than on the eastern Columbia Plateau.
4. “The Cayuse people had significant contact and clear cultural and historical ties including intermarriage with the Molalla Tribe of the Willamette Valley.” Beckham says the alleged linguistic affiliation of the Cayuse and Molalla languages has been “resoundingly and consistently rejected by linguistic scholars since the 1960s.”
5. “The presence of the (Umatilla) people increased during the fur trade and mission era, which brought additional (Umatilla) members to the Willamette Valley and increased use at Willamette

Falls.” Beckham fact-checks that statement as false as well, citing an 1839 Hudson’s Bay Co. census of Fort Vancouver Indians that identified no Umatilla Indians. He does concede there was one Walla Walla youth who briefly attended school on French Prairie in the early 1840s. “School attendance by one youth does not document Tribal presence and treaty rights,” he says.

6. “The Cayuse Five trial, during which Tribal headmen were tried and convicted in Oregon City, adjacent to Willamette Falls, for the deaths that took place at the Whitman Mission (near Walla Walla, Wash.) created deep and unresolved trauma that adds to CTUIR’s connection to the area of Willamette Falls.” Beckham said the Cayuse men were tried in Oregon City because it was the capital of the Oregon Territory and the location of the territorial court. “The trial in no way buttressed the reserved treaty rights of fishing, hunting, digging roots, gathering berries or grazing livestock for the CTUIR in western Oregon.”

“Such compelling findings require making Dr. Beckham’s complete report available to officials and the public,” Kennedy said. “Dr. Beckham’s analysis, and his citations to a plethora of well-regarded and widely known materials, ultimately speaks for itself.”

Kennedy’s letter and Beckham’s report have been posted on the Willamette Falls & Landing Heritage Area’s website at www.wflha.org.

“The biggest hurdle ahead is recognizing Tribal sovereignty and the federally recognized treaties that apply to the area,” said retiring Heritage Area Executive Director Siobhan Taylor, who previously worked for the Grand Ronde Tribe as Public Affairs director and currently is chair of the Tribe’s Editorial Board, which oversees *Smoke Signals*. “Make no mistake, this is in the ceded homelands of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde. And the treaty that applies is the Willamette Valley Treaty.” ■



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**UPDATE FROM:
ANGEL BOOKKEEPING LLC – Karen Case**

The Federal Tax Deadline to file is **May 15, 2021**

You are valued and please be assured we continue to be available to care for all your tax needs during this time of encouraged social distancing.

Due to the impact of Covid-19, we will not be scheduling any appointments in person at the Confederated Tribes in Grand Ronde, but will be available in the Willamina home office location.

We will continue to be doing taxes and accepting your documents via email, mail, drop-off, or by appointment at the Willamina home office location.

We are sorry for this inconvenience and encourage you to stay safe and healthy.

You may contact us at **971-237-1230**

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Service honored



Photo by Timothy J. Gonzalez

Tribal Council member Steve Bobb Sr. and former Tribal Council Chairman Reyn Leno share a smile after Leno was presented with a certificate from Spirit Mountain Casino to recognize his 25 years of service on the Spirit Mountain Gaming Inc. Board of Directors on Monday, March 29. Leno also served seven straight terms – 21 years – on Tribal Council.