

# Virtual Education Summit explores teaching Native culture

By Danielle Harrison

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Approximately 200 Oregon educators from all grade levels participated in the Grand Ronde Education Summit to learn more about the Grand Ronde Tribe, best practices for teaching standards required by Senate Bill 13, Native American art, cultural lifeways and the importance of Indigenous studies.

It's the second year in a row the summit has been held in a virtual format due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The free professional development training was open to all teachers, who were also provided resources and materials to use in their classrooms.

The one-day summit was held on Thursday, June 24, with Tribal Curriculum Specialist Justine Flynn welcoming participants.

"We strive to bring you meaningful and useful information to help educate your students about Native culture in Oregon, and how it helps all Oregon students," she said.

Cultural Resources Manager David Harrelson gave attendees an overview of Grand Ronde Tribal history, governmental structure, various ceremonies and events, as well as a virtual campus tour.

"Tribal people have been here in Oregon since time immemorial, before time began," Harrelson said. "Our people have long memories and the oldest geological event our people remember is the flooding of the Willamette Valley. ... One thing that is really helpful is the names of our ancestors are written on the landscape. These names might be familiar to you and they are named after the people who lived there."

Harrelson also thanked attendees



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~ Oregon Indian Education Director  
**April Campbell**

for making Senate Bill 13 curriculum meaningful to students. Senate Bill 13 required the Oregon Department of Education to develop curriculum relating to the Native American experience in Oregon. This includes Tribal history, sovereignty, culture, treaty rights, government, socioeconomic experiences and current events.

"We have as many schools as Tribal members," Harrelson said. "It's so important to have advocates and allies to help us do the work that needs to be done."

Tribal member and diversity coach Cheyanne Heidt delivered the keynote speech, where she discussed being a Native student and teacher, and her experiences with education in both roles.

She also talked about her business, Destination Diversity, and how she is working to help teachers implement culturally responsive teaching in their classrooms.

"My main theme is focusing on roles in my personal and professional life and how they interact with each other," Heidt said. "What drives my view of education is that the best teachers are those who are willing to learn from their students."

Heidt discussed her background and cultural foundations, and how her educational journey and differ-

ent experiences have informed her passion for culturally responsive teaching.

"I talk about culturally responsive teaching a lot. Not everyone knows about it," she said. "It is integrating students, family and community into your classroom curriculum and strategy. If you ask questions and learn more about students, you can take those pieces of information and integrate them into your classroom and what you teach. ... You can slowly and meaningfully bring culturally responsive teaching into your classroom. Everyone can benefit from these practices."

The summit has continued to increase in popularity among educators, especially in its virtual format, increasing from 90 attendees the first year it was held in Grand Ronde to 250 the fifth year.

After the keynote address, several breakout sessions were held where attendees could ask questions and work in small groups, just as if they were attending the summit in person.

Grand Ronde Tribal member and Oregon Indian Education Director April Campbell was one of the presenters. She works closely with state education groups, Oregon's nine federally recognized Tribes, and other Native communities and organizations. She also led the revision efforts for the Oregon American Indian/Alaska Native Education State Plan and currently leads efforts to implement Senate Bill 13.

Campbell discussed the services that she provides as Indian Education Director and plans for the future.

"We really do provide a wide variety of support through the state of Oregon to meet the objectives outlined in our plan," she said. "I felt proud that we were able to offer funding to all nine Oregon Tribes for language grants to continue to develop their Tribal language programs. ... With COVID and the social and emotional needs of our Native students, it was nice to be able to support them."

Plans for the next two years include a focus on what Campbell calls the "data justice" issue.

"There really is a gap in compiling data on our students," she said. "When you register a student you will be asked about ethnicities. We're looking at how we can collect it differently to help better identify all our (Native) students."

Other goals include managing discipline, assisting with transition to high school and post-secondary education, having increased Native school staff members, translating materials into Spanish and conducting assessments of Senate Bill 13 implementation efforts.

Curriculum for Senate Bill 13

was developed in 2018 and 2019 by a committee and implemented in school districts for required teaching in the 2019-20 school year to students in the fourth, eighth and 10th grades.

The committee included 18 representatives from Oregon's nine federally recognized Tribes, led by Portland-based Education Northwest Consultants, a nonprofit organization that worked with the Department of Education to support implementation of Senate Bill 13.

Tribal member and Guided Study/Credit Recovery Teacher Adam Langley led another breakout session that highlighted the importance of Indigenous studies in the classroom.

Langley discussed ways an educator can implement these practices into the curriculum and various starting points, as well as how these studies benefit all students.

"The number one thing we hear from kids is, 'Why haven't we learned this before?'" Langley said.

In the fall, he and Tribal member Zoe Holsclaw will be co-teaching a Shawash (Native) Studies course that will focus on historical and contemporary Native American issues, culture and language, especially as it relates to the Grand Ronde Tribe, and the resiliency of Native people as a whole. It will be offered to all Willamina High School students, regardless of Tribal affiliation.

"It is our hope that Shawash Studies will encourage a deeper understanding of Native American cultures and strengthen relationships and communication between Tribal and non-Tribal students and faculty," Langley said. "It will allow us to dive in and see how different history looks from different perspectives. Indigenous studies are needed because everyone deserves to understand how history has shaped their lives."

Langley also emphasized that anyone can teach Indigenous studies.

"You don't have to teach about culture or language if you don't feel comfortable doing so," he said. "You can examine federal, state and local policies/history same as you would any other subject in your classroom."

Langley closed with providing a brief tutorial of the Tribe's curriculum page and materials. All of these can be accessed for free at [www.grandronde.org](http://www.grandronde.org). Click on the "history and culture" tab, then on "curriculum."

Other morning breakout sessions included the Tribe's Natural Resources Department classroom programs, Native art, opportunities to learn about First Foods and a discussion on federal Native American policies.

Afternoon sessions included cultural and Native stories, Grand Ronde Tribal curriculum, Chinuk Wawa language programs, implementing Native culture in the classroom environment and culturally responsive teaching practices.

All sessions were recorded and will be posted at [www.grandronde.org/educationsummit2021](http://www.grandronde.org/educationsummit2021). ■



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(All Veterans Welcome! Tribal or non-Tribal and in the local area)

**Q: Has it been a while since you applied for benefits or had your benefits reviewed?**  
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**Q: Do you have a current service-connected disability, but are interested in applying for an increase or additional disabilities?**  
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