

Agreement with museum marks 23 years

METEORITE continued
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two parties reached an agreement that Tomanowos would remain in New York City provided that Tribal members had annual access for religious ceremonies and the museum sponsored an internship program for Tribal youth to spend two to three weeks working at the museum every summer. This marks the 23rd year of that agreement.

As previously mentioned, those in-person visits and the internships were suspended in 2020, 2021 and 2022 because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Museum breakfast

On Thursday, June 29, museum staff held a breakfast in the Mignone Halls of Gems and Minerals for the Grand Ronde delegation.

Museum Director Lisa Gugenheim welcomed Tribal members.

“This marks the 20th delegation that we’ve been able to welcome here at the museum,” Gugenheim said. “It’s always very, very meaningful to bring together the Tribal community, Elders, council members, chaperones and interns with our museum community for the first time in four years.”

Museum President Sean Decatur spoke about how the museum is working with Native communities regarding items in its collections and how they are displayed to the public.

“This is a season for renewal in many ways as we all emerge from the difficult pandemic years,” Decatur said. “It’s a time of renewal for the partnership between Grand Ronde and the museum. We’re very grateful for this opportunity.

“We’re living in an important



Photos by Michelle Alaimo

Tribal Elder Sue Ann Suderman tells stories about her family during a breakfast on Thursday, June 29, for the Grand Ronde delegation that traveled to the American Museum of Natural History for a private ceremony with Tomanowos. The breakfast was held in the museum’s Mignone Halls of Gems and Minerals.

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time, a time that is actually appallingly overdue in many ways, when institutions like this one, across the country and around the world are reckoning with their histories and with practices that have affected and damaged Native people, Native communities and treasured objects, traditions and knowledge. Like many other institutions right now, we are working to acknowledge our museum’s own history

with an intention of forthrightness, humility and a desire to learn. This work includes working with Native communities to improve the way their cultures are represented in our halls and programs.”

George spoke and gifted 14 dentalium necklaces to museum employees.

“We have this connection from one coast to the other coast,” George said. “But I speak more highly of friendships, of how we gather together to work together.”

Suderman, granddaughter of

Clara Riggs, displayed mementoes she brought along on the trip, including hawk feathers, and told two stories. Then the four interns took turns discussing their shared experiences while working at the museum.

The interns discussed the diversity of New York City, pigeons, the culture shock of going from a small town to a large city and how the experience has deepened their individual connections with Tomanowos.

Following the breakfast, Grand Ronde Tribal members received a behind-the-scenes tour of the museum’s extensive Native American textile archives led by Paul Beelitz, director emeritus of Collections and Archives in the Division of Anthropology, and Lauri Halderman, vice president of Exhibitions, led a tour of the Northwest Coast Hall.

The hall features a cedar and clam shell hat made by Tribal member Carol Colton and donated by Joanne Colton-Comeaux.

“Over these 23 years, this agreement that we have has become a model for our work,” Gugenheim said as she wrapped up the breakfast. “Reciprocal relationships, welcoming one another. I’ve had the privilege of being welcomed in the community, and being able to welcome you here today. These two weeks have been a privilege for us all.”

In addition to the Tomanowos activities, Tribal members and employees also visited the Statue of Liberty, the Metropolitan Museum of Art and caught the Broadway show “Wicked” on Friday, June 30, as well as squeezed in some shopping at the Lego and Harry Potter stores.

The Tribal contingent returned to Oregon on Saturday, July 1. ■



A delegation from Grand Ronde traveled to New York City for the annual private ceremony with Tomanowos, the Willamette meteorite, at the American Museum of Natural History, which was held on Thursday, June 29. Front row from left, Tribal Elder Sue Ann Suderman, Member Services Manager and Royalty Coordinator Shannon Simi, American Museum of Natural History intern Gracie Mercier, museum intern Mikayla Mercier and Senior Miss Grand Ronde 2022-23 Anavey Smith. Second row from left, Curriculum and Professional Development Program Manager Justine Flynn, museum intern Kaleigha Simi, museum intern Hattie Mercier, Tribal Council member Jon A. George, Tribal Elder Marcel Allen, Tribal Council Administrative Assistant Shannon Ham-Teixeira, Veterans Senior Queen 2022-23 Tasina Bluehorse and Communications Manager Sara Thompson, and back row from left, Cultural Education Specialist Cristina Lara and Multimedia Specialist Matthew Williams.