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Archiving Tribal Legacies

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The University of Oregon Libraries has an ongoing commitment to integrate American Indian history into its collections and programming, in order to encourage respect for indigenous cultures, to foster an understanding of the changes that have occurred within tribal communities, and to nurture an awareness of tribal legacies. The University of Oregon Libraries is cognizant that public institutions, including the University, have underserved tribal communities, and when communities are underserved by institutions, a gap in communication and understanding grows among the entities. In attempting to bridge this gap, it is not enough for public institutions to open their doors and wait for communities to find their way inside. Special invitations must be extended, commitments must be honored and given priority, and every effort must be made to adapt services and delivery to recognize cultural diversity.

Over the past twenty years, the University of Oregon has developed a number of initiatives to strengthen the bonds with regional tribes and deepen an understanding of tribal cultures. Most prominent among these has been the Southwest Oregon Research Project (SWORP). The mission of SWORP is to gather copies of original documents pertaining to the history of the Native peoples of greater Oregon. Many of these documents are located far from Oregon in National repositories, particularly in Washington, D.C. SWORP aims to repatriate these materials to the Native American Tribes. Access to these primary sources allows Native Americans and university scholars to continue to research and rewrite the history of colonization.

In May, 1997, leaders of coastal Oregon tribes gathered for the first time in more than a century for a potlatch ceremony on the UO campus. During the ceremony, leaders of the Coquille Tribe, in conjunction with the UO Libraries and Graduate School, presented to the tribes of Southwest Oregon copies of some 60,000 pages of documents on native history and culture. Another groundbreaking potlatch in June, 2001, brought together representatives of 44 western Indian tribes for the first time in at least 150 years, to celebrate the presentation of an additional 50,000 pages of archival material that SWORP researchers had recovered. In addition to the copies presented to the individual tribes, the UO Libraries hold a complete set in Special Collections and University Archives, where it is actively used by undergraduates and other researchers. This collection includes linguistic and ethnographic documents as well as political and military records produced by the federal government. SWORP is one of the most frequently used collections in Special Collections and University Archives. A guide to the SWORP collection can be found on the web at the Northwest Digital Archives (<http://nwda.orbiscascade.org/>).

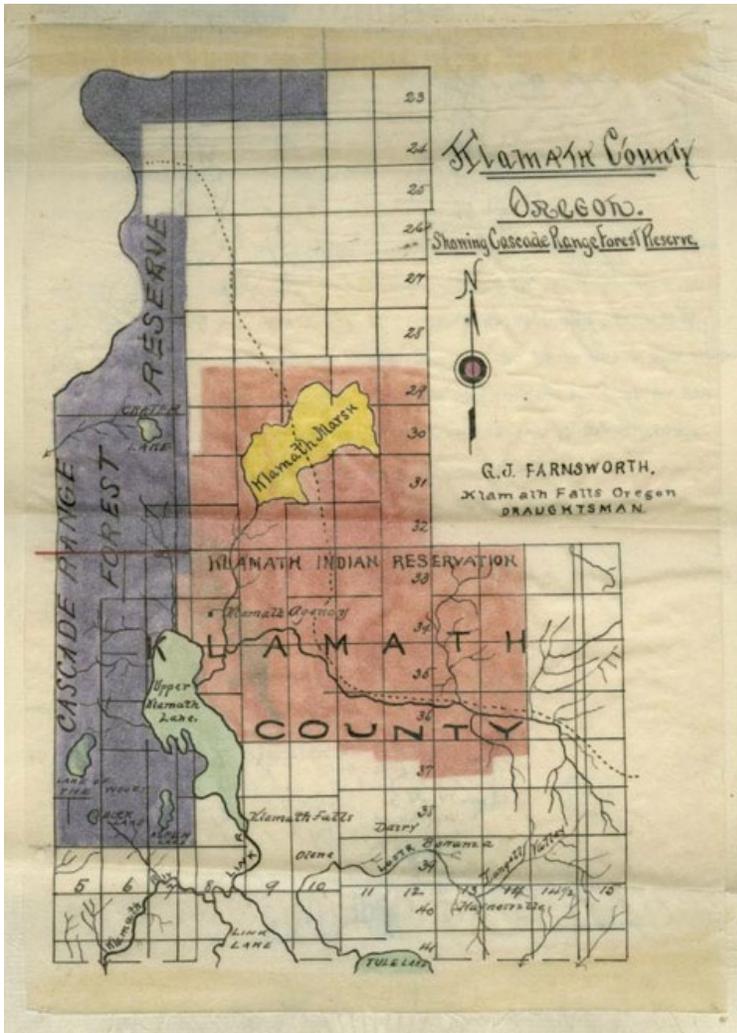
The Southwest Oregon Research Project was the first known project of its kind to be undertaken for a Native American Nation in cooperation with a major university. The SWORP process of using research teams composed of native and non-native researchers broke away from previous models of anthropological research. The groundbreaking work of SWORP has served as the inspiration for two current developments: the Tribal Legacies Initiative and the collaboration with Oregon Folklife Network and the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs to preserve tribal sound recordings.

Tribal Legacies Initiative

The Tribal Legacies Initiative was launched in 2011 by the University of Oregon Libraries, College Of Education, and Office of Institutional Equity and Diversity. A central focus of the Tribal Legacies Initiative has been the development of an online digital archive, or vir-



tual repository, of the extensive collection of Native American documents and three-dimensional objects currently housed in the UO's Special Collections and University Archives and the Museum of Natural and Cultural History. Activities so far have included surveying and identifying collections and selecting items for digitization. The goal is to increase awareness of tribal history and to make resources readily available to researchers and educators. Future efforts will provide the opportunity for tribal archivists and University of Oregon archivists to cross-train and work hand in hand to make this a dynamic, living repository that continues to grow.



Map of the Klamath Reservation, from the Oliver Cromwell Applegate Papers, University of Oregon Special Collections and University Archives.



Arranging three curriculum development workshops for elementary and secondary teachers in schools along the Lewis and Clark trail is another feature of the initiative. Utilizing the virtual repository, these workshops are designed for educators who seek to include indigenous perspectives in their classroom teaching about the Lewis and Clark Corps of Discovery Expedition. The National Parks Service and the University of Oregon's Office of Institutional Equity and Diversity are supporting these workshops. They are led by CHiXapkaid (Skokomish Nation), a Professor in Native American Studies in Education at the University of Oregon, and Jill Hamilton-Anderson of the National Parks Service. The first of these workshops was held July 8–14, 2012, at the University of Oregon and included twenty secondary educators from the western United States. They focused their work on developing lesson plans that include tribal perspectives and provide a balanced view of the Corps of Discovery.

Another critical component of the Tribal Legacies Initiative is a series of luncheons organized by Tom Ball, Assistant Vice President, Office of Institutional Equity and Diversity; CHiXapkaid; Deborah Carver, Philip H. Knight Dean Libraries; and Jon Erlandson, Director of the Museum of Natural and Cultural History and Professor of Anthropology. These gatherings bring together a critical mass of faculty, administrators, staff and student supporters to discuss their teaching and research on tribal cultures. A new minor in Native Studies at the University of Oregon has come out of these conversations. Faculty and students working within this minor (and eventual major) will rely greatly upon the current physical and emerging virtual repositories within the University.

Warm Springs Audio Preservation

In the course of our many conversations with tribal leaders, continual emphasis was placed on the importance and urgency of preserving and reformatting culturally significant tribal sound recordings, in order to capture pieces of oral history. With grant funding from the Oregon Heritage Commission, the Confederated tribes of Warm Springs, the Oregon Folklife Network and the University of Oregon Libraries developed a pilot project to preserve 40 hours of tribal sound recordings at the Warm Springs Reservation.

The overarching goal of the project is to create a model of collaboration for preserving and providing access to tribal sound recordings and to raise public awareness of a significant body of tribal heritage material that is at high risk of being lost. Specific activities of the grant partners include installing a preservation workstation at the Warm Springs Reservation, training tribal archivists in preservation recording and reformatting, and developing policies and procedures for audio preservation and transfer. In addition, the Oregon Folklife network will conduct video documentation of the project and produce an online training program that will be made available to other organizations with similar needs.

Conclusion

The accomplishments of these projects are transforming the University of Oregon; we are experiencing richer collaborations between the University and Oregon's tribes, a deeper appreciation of indigenous cultures, and a growing understanding of the history and changes that have occurred within tribal communities. The immediate, tangible benefits of this transformation are an increased preservation of and access to tribal documentation and history, the development of elementary and secondary curriculum that provides a balanced view of the indigenous peoples, and the creation of a Native Studies minor at the University of Oregon. In turn, these successes are helping to inspire a vision for a center and repository of Indian history that will further augment our understanding and give all Oregonians greater access to this rich cultural legacy. 

