

Tribes, Port dedicate 'The Gathering Place'

By the CUJ

CLOVER ISLAND - New statues of a grandmother and grandson harvesting tules symbolize not only the historical significance of The Gathering Place, but also the partnership between the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR) and the Port of Kennewick.

About 100 people, including leaders from the CTUIR, the Port and City of Kennewick, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and public art proponents, came together under a hot mid-day sun Aug. 4 to dedicate the new display along the north shore of Clover Island in the Columbia River.

The statues further symbolize the past and future. The grandmother in traditional dress is teaching her grandson, wearing tennis shoes and listening to music with headphones, how to harvest the tule reeds. The statues are accompanied by four interpretive signs that explain the history and culture of the tribal people who used the island as a trading center and wintering place, and tell visitors about current CTUIR activities and the Tribes' focus on the future. One of the panels tells about the tule reeds and the importance of plants in the traditions and culture of Indians of the region.

The relationship, codified with a Memorandum of Understanding in 2013, has grown to be more than a partnership, according to speakers at the event.

"It's not a partnership anymore, it's a friendship now," said Tim Arntzen, CEO for the Port.

Said Skip Novakovich, president of the Port Commission and a member of the Board of Directors for Tamastsiikt Cultural Institute, "We're here today with friends. Our forefathers would never have imagined a gathering like this."

Tamastsiikt - the museum on the Umatilla Indian Reservation - was represented at the event by Director Bobbie Conner and archivist Malissa Minthorn. Tamastsiikt provided historical information for the panels. Conner, Minthorn and Jen-



The Cayuse Singers drum group provided a beat for dancers during the Clover Island celebration in August. Posing with the two sculptures are, from left, Louis Van Peit, bronze artist Rodd Ambrosion, Malissa Minthorn Winks from Tamastsiikt, Randy Minthorn, Willie McKay and Caleb Minthorn. The statues are of a grandmother teaching her grandson how to harvest tules.



Participating in the ribbon cutting were, front row from left, Port of Kennewick CEO Tim Arntzen, CTUIR Board of Trustees Secretary N. Kathryn Brigham; Port of Kennewick Commission President Skip Novakovich; CTUIR Board of Trustees Vice Chairman Jeremy Wolf; a young dancer participating with the Nixyaawil Dance Troop; Historic Downtown Kennewick Partnership Vice President Vince Rundhaug holding the ribbon; Economic Community Development Committee member and former BOT Chair Les Minthorn. Back row, from left (seven people), Port of Kennewick Commission Vice President Thomas Moak; USACE Walla Walla District Commander LTC Damon A. Delarosa; Project Manager John Fetterolf; Port of Kennewick Director of Planning & Development and Project Contractor Duane Howard; Caleb Minthorn and Willie McKay, drummers with the Cayuse Singers. Middle back from left, (five people), Port of Kennewick Commission Secretary Don Barnes; Central Washington Director for Senator Patty Murray's Office Raquel Crowley; Randall Minthorn from the Cayuse Singers Drum; CTUIR Board of Trustees member Armand Minthorn; Kennewick Deputy CEO Tana Bader Inglima (barely visible behind Vince Rundhaug).

nifer Karson Engum were instrumental in "articulating" how the statues would remain true to tradition.

Marjorie Waheneka, Village Corodinator, at Tamastsiikt, and Elliott Gottfriedson, Baker, the nephew of Conner, were the initial models for bronze artist Rodd Ambrosion, who said he was honored to be part of the emotional project.

"I feel like an interloper," Ambrosion said, adding that he was humbled to get a "glimpse of another culture."

Ambrosion said his work took on new meaning at his Joseph studio when Conner and her mother, Leah, visited.

"They talked in real time as I worked" suggesting tweaks to different facial features. "Bobbie articulated and I followed her direction."

Conner said the project helps break down stereotypes by providing a more accurate history for visitors.

Things changed during the course of the project, which now is an "honest representation of tribal language and culture."

"We're often accused of being stuck in the past but that's a stereotype," Conner said.

When Lewis and Clark came through in April of 1806, they were met by some 500 tribesmen from Yakama and Wapallapum, Conner said.

She said the Indians gathered and prophesied that "if our people were to survive, it would be because we were strong once again."

Now, Conner said, prophesy is being fulfilled and is manifested, symbolically, with the statue of the grandmother, rooted in the past, and the young man, preparing for the future.

Jeremy Wolf, Vice Chairman of the CTUIR Board of Trustees, told the crowd that the artwork appropriately "honors our ancestors through the elder lady, our future in the young man, the highly utilized plants that shelter and protect us, and of course water, the giver of life."

CTUIR leader Les Minthorn, a former BOT Chairman who was characterized as a "champion of the project," said the Tribes and the Port forged a relationship based on similar vision and mission.

"The partners became an extended family with the land and water," he said. Such relationships, he said, require partners to "step up on occasion" and respect each other in spite of differences.

"Our hearts are in the same place for our people and your community," Minthorn said.

Lieutenant Damon A. Delarosa, commander of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in Walla Walla, said the event was a testament to "our relationship with stakeholders around the region." He called the CTUIR a "key partner" in cultural resources issues and a "key ally" in fish restoration.

Barb Carter, the Port's Art Liaison, called The Gathering a "gift to the community" that tells the "story of the people who came before us."

She said, too, that The Gathering Place is a wonderful example of how art can change a "non-descript place into an attraction."

"Some people believe public art is fluff," she said. "But it has the power to change a community."



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