

2015

Natives in the Nation's Archives: The Southwest Oregon Research Project

David G. Lewis

Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, dgl.coyotez@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.usu.edu/westernarchives>

Recommended Citation

Lewis, David G. (2015) "Natives in the Nation's Archives: The Southwest Oregon Research Project," *Journal of Western Archives*: Vol. 6: Iss. 1, Article 4.

Available at: <http://digitalcommons.usu.edu/westernarchives/vol6/iss1/4>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at DigitalCommons@USU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of Western Archives by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@USU. For more information, please contact becky.thoms@usu.edu.



Natives in the Nation's Archives: The Southwest Oregon Research Project

Cover Page Footnote

I would like to acknowledge the Coquille Indian Tribe for its visionary efforts to help all tribes in the Oregon area.

Natives in the Nation's Archives: The Southwest Oregon Research Project

David G. Lewis
George Wasson Jr.

ABSTRACT

The Southwest Oregon Research Project, initiated by members of the Coquille Indian tribe broke ground in Oregon for archival collections. Tribal scholars, working to restore and support their tribal nations collected documents and learned skills of archival research and organization. The last phase of the project returned collections to regional tribes in a community process of potlatch. The project theory reversed the trend of the late 19th and early 20th centuries of collecting information from tribes with little or no reciprocity. Tribes today are using the information to write histories, restore cultural identities and support tribal sovereignty.

The Problem

Tribal nations are in the midst of a rebuilding like never before. More than 500 years ago, tribes generally were heavily impacted by British, Spanish, French and later American efforts to colonize and take all tribal lands from tribal people. Societies collapsed and tribes were moved to reservations, many hundreds of miles from their original homelands. On the reservations, tribes sought to form tribal communities while surviving centuries of corrosive federal government policies that sought the complete elimination of the tribes. Arguably, the last major effort to eliminate tribes was the termination policies of the 1950s, specifically federal House Concurrent Resolution 108 and Public Law 208 and the Western Oregon Indian Termination Act, which together sought the liquidation of all tribes and the elimination of the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

In the late 19th century, tribal societies had declined so heavily that social scientists feared the disappearance of the "native." The birth of anthropology, specifically salvage anthropology, at the same time caused a mass collection of

artifacts and information about the tribes. Yet even while salvage anthropology in many ways brought American Indians and especially their cultures to the foreground in America, the tribes continued to decline. While early social scientists may have wanted to highlight tribal societies, they were also implicit in the colonization of tribes.

Colonization included an early documentation of the tribal peoples for political and economic purposes. Early explorer-scientists, such as James Swan, and Catholic missionaries, such as Father Le Jeune, began the collection of information regarding tribal peoples and their cultures. Collection of data was then undertaken by the father of American anthropology, Franz Boas. Boas was in Oregon during the 1890s and later directed efforts to send other researchers into the field to continue documentation of tribal languages and folklore to complete the studies he had initiated with the Chinookan tribes.¹

During this time Oregon tribal reservations became laboratories for social scientists to gather raw data about tribal nations. Their documentation was later gathered into collections like those of the Bureau of American Ethnography, which became the foundational collection of the National Anthropological Archives. These archives contain the culmination of perhaps 150 years of ethnological collections from the Americas and are estimated to be the largest such collection in the world. Yet despite all of the collections and work on tribal languages in the initial 60 years of the 20th century, most tribal languages of western Oregon went extinct, with no known speakers.

The Tribes Lose Their Homelands

Encompassing this same period, the tribes in Oregon were engaged in a process of assimilation, a policy that the federal government practiced since the beginnings of Indian reservations. From 1853 to 1855 the western Oregon tribes ceded some 14 million acres to the federal government to gain a permanent reservation, services, money and security from further attacks by territorial volunteer militia.² The tribes in western Oregon were gathered onto the Grand Ronde Indian Reservation by 1856. In 1887 Congress passed the Dawes Act allowing land allotment to individuals. By 1906 tens of thousands of acres were declared surplus and subject to sale, opening the land up to non-Indian purchase. The western Oregon reservations of Grand Ronde and Siletz were reduced to a few hundred allotments. By the 1950s most of the allotments were gone with only about 400 acres remaining at Grand Ronde after individual Indians received their fee simple titles. In 1954 all western Oregon tribes were

1. David Lewis and Deanna Kingston, "The History and Context of Oregon Tribal Language Archival Collections," in *Teaching Oregon Native Languages*, edited by Joan Gross (Corvallis, OR: Oregon State University Press, 2007).
2. David Lewis, *Termination of the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde Community of Oregon: Politics, Community, Identity* (Corvallis, OR: Oregon State University Press, 2009), 94.

terminated, seemingly completing the colonization of the region.

For over 25 years the tribes worked to become restored. The Bureau of Indian Affairs had established a policy for recognition of tribes that required tribes to have maintained a culture and governance structure throughout their history. The importance of records regarding the tribes' existence became a particular focus to the tribes in western Oregon as they sought restoration. Tribes who had survived through the previous 140 years of colonization had to prove their past and present existence to the very government who had worked to eliminate them forever.

The Coquille Tribe

The question of a tribe's right to exist weighed heavily in the creation of the Southwest Oregon Research Project, an archival collection initiated at the University of Oregon. During the 1980s members of the Coquille Tribe, led by tribal scholar George Wasson Jr., were working to restore their tribe and the resultant collection provided incontrovertible proof of their existence.³

The Coquille Tribe had been terminated in 1954 under the Western Oregon Indian Termination Act, Public Law 588, along with all Western Oregon Tribes.⁴ The Coquilles, never given a chance to organize a defense against termination nor granted the ability to vote on whether they agreed to be terminated, were caught up in the bill with 59 other tribes.⁵ Like all other tribes, their history was fraught with Americans' efforts to divest themselves of the "Indian Problems." Historically tribes had been removed to the Alsea Reservation between 1856 and 1865, and after 1875 were forced again to relocate to the new Siletz Indian Reservation. Many Coquille people refused to remove to Siletz and instead went to live back in their homelands around Coos Bay, near the South Slough, and around the town of Empire City, eventually receiving off-reservation Indian allotments. In the 20th century they successfully sued the government in an Indian Claims Case, for taking their land without being compensated for it.

After termination the tribe worked to be restored along with four other tribes in western Oregon. In 1989 the Coquille Indian Tribe was restored as a federally recognized tribe. But like all tribes seeking federal recognition, they had to prove that they had a living culture and a continuous functioning government. Due to the history of degradation of the tribes in Oregon, proving their right to existence was difficult. Coquille tribe member George Wasson Jr. found records related to the tribe

3. George Wasson Jr. passed in March 2014, the victim of a tragic and as yet unexplained event at his home in Eugene, Oregon.
4. Western Oregon Indian Termination Act (PL 588), 1954; Lewis, *Termination of the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde Community of Oregon*, 194.
5. Non-reservation tribes were not given the choice to vote about their termination.

in the National Anthropological Archives in the field notes of social scientists that contained collected information about the Coquille language and culture.⁶ Wasson collected the ethnographic field notes from the National Anthropological Archives in Washington, D.C. after learning about them during visits to the Smithsonian Institution.

While researching Coquille documentation, Wasson created the notion of the Southwest Oregon Research Project. He gained the support of the University of Oregon and the Smithsonian Institution to undertake the project. His focus came from the need for spiritual and cultural rebirth for all western Oregon tribes. He foresaw that even if the tribal governments could be restored, that the people would still suffer from the effects of the past 150 years of colonization and assimilation imposed by the Americans.

SWORP I & SWORP II

The Southwest Oregon Research Project (SWORP) was initiated in 1995 with researchers returning some 50,000 pages from the National Anthropological Archives, then located at the Museum of Natural History. After the first collection project, the Coquille Indian Tribe and the University of Oregon made nine copies of the collection and gave copies back to the Oregon tribes in a historic potlatch giveaway in 1997.

In my first few years as a Native student at the University of Oregon, I worked to find a project that was relevant to the tribes of Oregon. I attended the first SWORP potlatch in 1997 and was inspired by the sense of giving and appreciation from the audience of native people and academics from throughout the region. In 1998 I was recruited by graduate students in the Anthropology Department, George Wasson Jr., Mark Tveskov, and Jason Younker, another member of the Coquille Tribe, to be part of the research team to visit Washington, D.C. for SWORP II.

The 1998 Southwest Oregon Research Project II involved six weeks of searching through the National Archives and National Anthropological Archives (NAA) to find documents relevant to the tribes of western Oregon. This project was ultimately successful and we returned to Oregon with roughly 60,000 pages of documents that were copied from both archives. SWORP II added to the previous SWORP I research from 1995 that collected 50,000 pages from the NAA. Perhaps more importantly the

6. George Wasson Jr. received a Bachelors degree in Music, Masters in Counseling, and a PhD in Anthropology; all from the University of Oregon. He was also a long-term employee at the University of Oregon, originally hired as assistant dean of student affairs while working on his Masters, and an advocate for Native students since the beginnings of the Native American Student Union in the late 1960s. George travelled throughout the world. and was from a line of leaders on his tribe. In fact, his father George Wasson Sr. was an important leader and intermediary to the federal government for all Oregon tribes in the early part of the 20th century.

majority of the team were tribal members from several tribes: Patti Whereat from the Coos tribe, Robert Kentta from the Siletz, Denise and Amanda Hockema from Coquille, and I from Grand Ronde as well as Mark Tveskov, the field manager of the project. This was a powerful arrangement; the notion that educated Oregon native people were doing this work together, and were increasing their skills in doing so, was greatly empowering. While there, we even took the opportunity to visit and view the original signed treaties of the tribes, itself a monumental event.

Reorganization of the Collection & SWORP III

Returning to Eugene the next year, I was inspired to do something with the collected records to benefit all of the tribes. During the years spanning 1998-2000, I initiated an effort to index and reorganize the collections into one useable collection at the University of Oregon Special Collections. I created a detailed list of every file along with its condition and subjects into my own database. I presented this information to the principle faculty advisor of the project, Dr. Jon Erlandson, and he went after support from the Anthropology Department, Knight Library, and Graduate School to reorganize and fully describe the collection. Our project was born—to reorganize the two SWORP collections into one usable collection, with a researcher-friendly finding aid for the collection. After I completed this project, we then secured funds to copy the collection for another potlatch. For this project I supervised several undergraduate and graduate students over several terms to make copies and complete the finding aid for the collection. We felt especially blessed in this project since Knight Library Director Deborah Carver gave up her office so that we could work over the course of several terms to complete the copying of the collection for the second potlatch. The finding aid *Guide to the Southwest Oregon Project (SWORP) Collection 1850-1950* was published by the University of Oregon in 2001.⁷ The project worked with student tribal members from the Klamath, Siletz, Grand Ronde, Coquille, Coos, and Coastal Band Chumash tribes. The resulting copies were given away to seventeen regional tribes following a potlatch at Knight Law Center at the University of Oregon.

Over the next six years, I pursued a PhD in Anthropology and continued on as the coordinator and later Director of the SWORP program. In 2005, I pursued a grant through the Coquille Community Fund to undertake another SWORP research project in Washington, D.C. This third field research project commenced in the summer of 2006.

7. Finding Aid: Guide to the Southwest Oregon Project (SWORP) Archival Collection, University of Oregon, 2001, David Lewis, editor, created 2001, <http://nwda.orbiscascade.org/ark:/80444/xv14723/op=fstyle.aspx?t=k&q=SWORP>(accessed May 2014).

SWORP III

The third project involved additional subjects and techniques that did not exist in the earlier projects. First we expanded the collection to all of Oregon. Then instead of only paper copies we created digital scans of the documents, because they would be more useful for research and easier to disseminate later. Scans do not have the copy costs or a need for physical storage spaces. They also do not have the paper, ink, and shipping costs of paper photocopying. For the effort we utilized two laptops and two scanners.

I recruited a team of four students at the University of Oregon. We had gained the support of travel funds from the Smithsonian Institution and other research funds from University of Oregon, a community grant from the Coquille Tribe, and additional aid from Dr. JoAllyn Archambault of the Natural History Museum. Once we arrived in Washington, D.C. the team began in earnest at the National Archives to continue the effort to collect correspondences related to the reservations of Oregon.⁸ Previously the SWORP II project had copied 11 years of letters. We continued with this and began with the next year, 1897.

We first began looking through the finding aids copied onto microfilm at the archives. There were two layers of these finding aids and it was a laborious process to copy down all the sequential letter numbers for each year. But we did this for the first year (1897) and found, as with the previous effort, there were perhaps 200 letters for the year. The team began working on this, learning how to order the carts, the procedures for scanning each document, and how to label the documents. We organized the digital files so that the letter pages were sequential so that everything lined up in first numerical and then alphabetical order. There were slight differences but the team grasped the concept quickly and began organizing our efforts.

We divided our efforts in teams of two; one person found the letters in the boxes to copy and the other did the scanning. With roughly 80 percent of our efforts involving scanning, we became very efficient at this. For a few documents, such as record books and maps, we had to either photograph them or make overhead photocopies.

In addition, we spent a few days at the National Anthropological Archives. In the intervening seven years since we were in Washington, D.C, the NAA had created a searchable website of their collections, and I had prepared a list of documents at the NAA that we did not have in our collection.⁹ Using the list to search the NAA collections website, the process was quick and efficient and we finished at the NAA in

8. These correspondences make up the majority of Series 2 in UO's SWORP collection as Record Group 75 (RG75).

9. Smithsonian Institution, "National Anthropological Archives, Human Studies Film Archives," Smithsonian Institution, <http://www.nmnh.si.edu/naa/> (accessed May 2014).

two days. We found that since the NAA had been moved from the Natural History Museum to College Park, many of the manuscripts previously missing had been found.

At NARA, we became aware of a problem with our research efforts regarding the letterboxes. One researcher, Leslie Riggs (Grand Ronde) had begun looking through the letters individually, ignoring the microfilms of indexed finding aid numbers. He began finding seven times the number of letters related to our subject tribes (Siletz, Grand Ronde, Roseburg, Klamath, Chemawa, Warm Springs, Umatilla) than we had numbers for. After some soul searching and a meeting, we decided to change our research methods and began looking through each box and each letter, ignoring the finding aids. This process was extremely laborious though we found roughly 1,500 pages in 1897 alone, far larger than the 200 we had initially expected. Over the following years I worked to receive and process the collection, which was completed in 2009.

The SWORP Research Collection

The two previous SWORP collections are now collectively housed at the University of Oregon Special Collections & Archives Research Center (SCARC). They are one of the most used manuscript collections in SCARC. In 2012 Knight Library undertook a special project to digitize all of the SWORP records. They gifted all of the area tribes' copies of the digitized records. The 2006 collection is still only housed at the Coquille and Grand Ronde tribes pending a later potlatch event.

This set of projects has revealed that there is an amazing array of data available for tribes in the National Archives and in the National Anthropological Archives. Tribes can easily and efficiently gather many of these records. Since SWORP, I have worked with The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde in my role at Cultural Department Manager to conduct research at the National Archives in Seattle. We are now using all of these collected records to research and write histories of the tribe, which offer a deeper level of research than those written previously by historians of Oregon history.

Why These Documents Are Important to the Tribes

The initiation of the Southwest Oregon Research Project took much work and effort on the part of its creator George Wasson, Jr. Many in the Wasson family, long a part of the tribal leadership, were key tribal organizers and represented the tribe through the tumultuous 20th century. George Wasson Sr. was an organizer for tribes in western Oregon, while relatives such as Tom Younker served many years on the Tribal council. George Wasson Jr. led the tribe by recovering a large body of the tribe's intellectual knowledge by initiating and building SWORP. Wasson Jr. saw the need to gather these records to aid in the recovery of tribal cultural identity that many tribal members in western Oregon would experience once the tribes were

federally restored. The following essay by Wasson Jr. discusses his thoughts and reasoning about initiating the SWORP project.

Prelude to SWORP: The Need for Cultural and Spiritual Re-Centering for Adult Children of Acculturated Indian Parents¹⁰

Because of the short timespan from the beginning of everyday White contact among the Native peoples of the southern Oregon Coast, until the demise of their cultural, spiritual, and physical integrity, very little knowledge through scientific research was collected and preserved for posterity. In 1931 T. T. Waterman wrote: "A number of ethnologists worked in this region [southern Oregon coast], prior to the writer's advent ... but relatively little concerning these groups has found its way into print."¹¹ Indications of the extensive variety of lost languages, myths, tales and cultural traditions in the Pacific Northwest (and most particularly in southwestern Oregon), can be noted in the 1940 comments of Melville Jacobs:¹²

Northwest states, before 1750, had sixty to seventy Indian languages, two to three thousand bands, hamlets, or villages, and something under, around, or over two hundred thousand people. This hunting-fishing-gathering population could once have yielded a million or more versions of myths, smaller numbers of tales, and no one can estimate how much of other oral genres ... Myths of most variable merit that have been collected over the region total less than a thousand and will never exceed that number. Tales amount to a few hundred, forever so. The bleak harvest is ... maybe one percent of what could have been obtained if the culture-bound, condescending, and racist invaders had had the slightest capacity to perceive merit in the heritages of non-Europeans. By the time anyone with such capacity went to work, native humiliation and extinction had erased almost everything. Folklore-oriented linguists ... arrived too late after the pioneers had trampled upon and destroyed the Indians.

By that time, most of the aboriginal myths and legends had been lost with the extreme decimation of the Native peoples. Many young tribal members today are

10. George and I were friends for 20 years; he invited me to be a part of SWORP and encouraged me through my work on the project. In November 2013, I asked George to author an essay about the beginnings of the project, having recalled voluminous discussions we had about his work in the 1970s and 1980s. His included essay, completed in February 2014, is perhaps George's last writing on the SWORP project.
11. 1931 unpublished field notes, No. 3183, The Athapascan Indians of Southwestern Oregon and Northwestern California, Archives of the Bureau of American Ethnology, Smithsonian Institution.
12. Melville Jacobs, "Coos Myth Texts," *University of Washington Publications in Anthropology*, 8, no. 2 (April 1940).

desperate to understand the overall processes of cultural change and acculturation of the older generations.

Due to the thorough destruction of the villages, the people, and their life-ways, only bits and pieces of their culture and languages survived after what could be understood as the “Oregon Holocaust.” From this perspective, I have adopted the concept of a cultural or ethnological “black hole” as a descriptive term for Southwestern Oregon, where the surviving descendants have retained only a few relics of their indigenous culture. My approach to rediscovering and understanding the cultural contents of that black hole is to examine those characteristics of neighboring tribes for whom there is fairly adequate information and draw parallel inferences about the lost information.

The Coquelles are a group from that black hole, and I propose looking at the “bits and pieces” of surviving knowledge about them in an effort to reconstruct (as adequately as feasible) their lost and forgotten cultural heritage.

Acculturation as Federal Policy

Since the coming of the White men, many generations of Indian children have been taken from their home environment, as part of an insidious U.S. Government program to “kill the Indian and educate the man.” In the process of doing so, Colonel Richard Henry Pratt announced his plans after the Indian Wars to establish a school for civilizing young Indians (as much as could be expected) and replace their “savage” ways with the “superior” lifestyle of the White man. Pratt was deeply engrossed in religious symbolism and advocated “total immersion” (in White culture) for young Indians: “In Indian civilization I am a Baptist because I believe in immersing the Indians in our civilization and when we get them under holding them there until they are thoroughly soaked.”¹³ This became the impetus for establishing the military-style Carlisle Indian Industrial School in Carlisle, Pennsylvania.

In 1853, my grandfather, George R. Wasson, built the first log cabin in Empire City on Coos Bay. By 1856, nearly all of the older Indians had been either killed off or taken away to reservations. My father was born in 1880, the first generation after the coming of the White man. His mother didn’t want to hold him back by hindering him socially with the use of her Native languages, so she insisted that he learn English and become educated in the best possible schools. Carlisle was free to Indians, so that’s where he went. He had also attended school at Chemawa. He was doomed to spend the rest of his adult life between the two worlds of Indian and White men, battling to explain each to the other, and never having an opportunity to just be himself, in either place.

That was a common story for many capable and intelligent young Indians just after the turn of the century. The land, hunting and fishing rights, culture, and

13. Linda F. Witmer, *The Indian Industrial School, Carlisle, Pennsylvania, 1879-1918*, 3rd ed., (Carlisle, PA: Cumberland County Historical Society, 2002).

traditions were all considered gone with the unratified treaties of 1855. Language was of little use, except for talking with old people or occasionally to keep nosy Whites from understanding personal conversations. However, for most young people, the stigma of being Indians (or half-breeds) was a major obstacle to overcome, and talking “Indian” was not one of the better qualities to show off in public.

Speaking in Native languages was discouraged and punishable in the government schools since the primary intent of education was to make better people out of the “savages.” Naturally, many young Indians all over the country grew up with little or no use of their Native languages. Along with that loss of language was the deplorable prohibition and loss of cultural and spiritual traditions and tribal identity. Equally deplorable was the anxiety and frustration experienced by those young Indians who knew major concepts of their ancestral culture, knew the difference as compared to the dominant culture (which spoke English), and yet were not given the freedom and pleasure of expressing themselves in the languages so vital to their ancestral heritage.

Among my siblings, it was my brother Wilfred and I who continued on to college and who shared in exchanging information on our tribe’s culture and history. There were many times, however, that I realized how limited my knowledge was compared to the vast amount of culture that was lost or systematically destroyed and obliterated. The ultimate product was a truly devastating “cultural black hole.”

At college, I became really embarrassed when I couldn’t bring myself to confess that I didn’t even know the names and locations of the major popular tribes in the United States. I didn’t know the histories of U.S./Indian relationships. I didn’t know the full histories of our treaty, our language, or our culture. As I met more Indians, I felt more inadequate. I finally completed an undergraduate degree, and immediately entered into a master’s program in counseling. At the same time, I was offered (and accepted) a position as an Assistant Dean of Students at the University of Oregon.

Because I proudly claimed my “Indianness,” it seemed I was expected by other administrators to be able to answer any questions concerning all Indians, and to relate in a “culturally correct manner” to any other Indian on campus, whatever tribe they came from, and whatever problem they had for the University to solve. I was expected to know how to deal with other Indians and their problems equally well.

I could understand my own problem of not knowing my own tribe’s culture and history, but not knowing much about other Indians as well compounded the situation enormously. One solution was to read and study all I could about all Indians in America. That was a monumental task, which would lead me into years of study and research. It seemed to take more years and skills than I ever hoped to have. It sometimes seemed hopeless.

Through the 1970s and 1980s, there was a major surge in the search for self-awareness for concerned Indians all across the country. Not all Indians experienced such a desperate loss of self-identity, but such was the case for nearly all of those

tribal members and descendants from the federally terminated tribes of the 1950s, especially in southwest Oregon.

Many tragic tales could be told about the conflicts and atrocities suffered by Oregon Indians, such as the horrible slaughter or outright mass murder at the Nasomah Village instigated by William Packwood and his sidekick Soap in 1854. The effect on the tribes of southern Oregon was an American holocaust just as suffered by the Jews during World War II in Germany. Just as the holocaust in Germany must be taught and remembered, so must the holocaust in Oregon be taught in our schools so Oregonians and other Americans will know our collective history. That knowledge might better insure that such a holocaust never happens again.

In pondering the analogy of the cultural black hole of the southern Oregon coast, it should be noted that black holes of outer space are thought to absorb and condense all available matter within reach, but then are no longer visible or identifiable to the outside observer. Only research from an insider perspective will reveal the lost information so vital to the "re-culturation" of the Coquelles and their neighbors.

My insider perspective on the needs of adult children of acculturated Indian parents for cultural and spiritual re-centering was my impetus for researching the Smithsonian and other archives in Washington, D.C. Discovering a plethora of unpublished documents revealing cultural and historical bits of information resulted in SWORP.

Field research at the National Archives

The initial response I received from JoAllyn Archambault at the Smithsonian was that we'd find very little of interest there relating to the Coquille Indians. One of the first admonitions to our group was that we must have Nothing to do with NAGPRA (Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act). Of course, I readily agreed to that, and admonished our small research team to work cautiously around that topic.

Taking on the cultural black hole, our research about the Coquelles would need to expand beyond what was considered their aboriginal territory. Meaningful research needed to be done in what is now called the "cultural geography," or the aboriginal cultural/geographic areas. Any information regarding Coquille Indians would also be gleaned from U.S Government and Military documents, official reports, personal letters, and diaries of explorers, travelers, settlers, etc. relating to the close neighbors and surrounding tribal relatives of the Coquelles. There was no research guide or roadmap for such a process. Therefore, I proceeded to invent one, which our team helped to create and followed with signifiers to catch our attention in obscure areas.

We compiled lists of places: military forts, outposts, camps, Native villages, etc. We also listed names of US military personnel, Indian agents, members of the Bureau of American Ethnology, US Land Survey reports, Indian allotments, etc. We

attempted to compile the various spellings of personal names, Native leaders, villages, and places. These lists became a way to both familiarize ourselves with names and to navigate through the microfilm indexes. They were invaluable to our efforts.

The published and unpublished works of early linguists, ethnologists, and archaeologists were of great value, even though much of the collections were nearly impossible to understand and decipher, especially when recorded in cryptic phonetics or personal shorthand styles of the collector. John P. Harrington was one such linguist/ethnologist. (I first discovered Harrington's notes back in 1975-76, during my initial visit to Washington, D.C. with the American Indian Cultural Resources Training Grant.) The SWORP team also began to look more closely at the plethora of cultural/historical information garnered from our older tribal relatives such as Coquelle Thompson.

The actual process of obtaining funding from various institutions, i.e. Smithsonian, University of Oregon, and the Coquille Indian Tribe was fraught with complexities, mistakes, promises, and delays. The logistics of getting participants from Oregon to Washington D.C., finding suitable housing, planning local transportation, personal living expenses, and food seemed all quite manageable. However, constant delays receiving promised daily funds became quite devastating. Frustrations in creating new research methods, exploring unknown resources, making continuous phone calls, and waiting for responses all consumed time and energy daily.

It was extremely tiring trying to maintain a regular smoothly-running research process while constantly worrying about the financial shortcomings and delays from money sources. The other research team members were often on their own, struggling to determine what information was pertinent to our research, how and where to find it, and I was quite uncertain of the answers to all that myself. Consequently, when my time was taken up with phone calls, juggling finances, and discovering that money transfers or special delivery mail had been returned without my notification, tension and short tempers disrupted our good works.

Esprit de corps suffered with these frustrations, along with the untested research topics and areas. Our final success depended on the individual creativity and perseverance among the researchers. It was a brave crew that managed to hang in there and successfully complete the first summer of SWORP I.

SWORP is far from being a final product in itself, and must be considered a beginning to making vast amounts of obscure, lost, and/or hidden tribal information on Southwest Oregon, Northern California, and the surrounding areas of the Pacific Northwest unobscured and accessible. Much more research is yet to come out of it.

Dr. George Wasson Jr., February 2014

Eugene, Oregon

Conclusion

The SWORP project, led by members of the Coquille Tribe, exemplifies the reversal of the process of colonization. The tribe, in collaboration with University of Oregon and the Smithsonian Institution, made copies of the documents and constructed a local collection in Oregon accessible to researchers and the tribes. In addition, the Coquille Tribe and the University of Oregon engaged in two potlatches (1997, 2001), where copies of the collections were given to Oregon tribes and other regional tribes for their tribal archives. Former SWORP director, Jason Younker, stated that this was the “paper proof” that formerly terminated tribes needed to continue to prove their right to exist under federal law.¹⁴ George Wasson Jr., SWORP’s initiator, saw the collection as a way to fill the “cultural black hole” of tribal intellectual knowledge and help restore tribal members’ cultural identities.

Today we use the SWORP collection almost every week within the Grand Ronde tribe. Besides being digitized by University of Oregon, a digital copy of the collection is also available through the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde’s searchable database that allows us to efficiently access them in our Laserfiche system. The documentation in the collection are invaluable parts of numerous events at the reservations and have contemporary usefulness for research in genealogy and studies of reservations’ character, how they began, what happened while they were active, and how projects such as roads, allotments and railroads were enacted in their time. These are facts of our deep history that were largely ignored by period historians. By using the SWORP collection we can fill in missing details when we write our histories. In addition, parts of the collection have been used to restore traditional technologies. In one example, the method of making canoes by burning them out was confirmed for the Clackamas tribe through ethnographic documents from SWORP.

To me, SWORP has become not just another archival project but an important junction of two fields of scholarship: anthropology and archives. This has led to powerful cross perspectives on the nature of anthropology and archives that have helped me in my continued work in these fields. For the tribes, this is a valuable example of the continued engagement needed over the next few decades to enhance their cultural development and to defend and secure their rights to exist as tribal sovereignties. The nature of the project and resultant collection does exactly what was originally intended by the visionaries at the Coquille Tribe.

14. Jason Younker, former SWORP director, is now a faculty member at Rochester Institute of Technology. Termination was a federal policy that began in the 1940s; 63 Oregon tribes were terminated from 1954 into the 1980s. Tribes lost all federal rights granted under their treaties. 109 tribes were terminated nationally. The policy changed in the 1980s.