

The Kalapuya People: Sherwood's Past and Present

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“You Can't Really Know Where You Are Going Until You Know Where You Have Been” - Maya Angelou.

In early March I enjoyed a visit to the Sherwood Historical Society's **Heritage Center** that is housed in two renovated (2003) historical buildings, The Morback and Smock houses. Clyde List, the attendant that day, explained that much of what is in the museum is brought in by residents. There is a vast array of antique items that speak of the earlier days of our town. In one corner I discovered a display about the Tualatin band of Kalapuya—or as they call themselves, the Atfalati—the indigenous people who call the land where Sherwood is today their home. There is an informative display about *Where Native Americans Lived in the Sherwood Area* that I found interesting.

Reading the information and pondering the display piqued my interest to learn more. I am curious about local indigenous tribes and am eager to learn about pre-contact cultures and the life stories of people who were displaced from their homes. While none of us alive today was responsible for how unfairly the Kalapuya people were treated, we can embrace the truth of their continued connection to this land and the survivance of Native communities today.

The first place I discovered was the **Five Oaks Museum** on the PCC Rock Creek Campus in Beaverton. You can check out their website and amazing resources they offer before planning your visit to this gem of local history as well as current information, exhibits, and events of the living Kalapuya community. On June 24th they reopened with a new exhibit: *Replenish the Root: Six Centuries of Gathering Under the Oaks*. This new exhibit “tells the story of the Five Oak's Historic Site, a grove of Oregon white oaks with 600 years of known human habitation, and explores how oak savanna habitat, Indigenous and European-American history, and agriculture have shaped the Tualatin Valley over time.”

Among the impressive collection there is an informative short video that shows how to grow an acorn into an oak tree, and beautiful artwork by local, indigenous artists in addition to a display of bear grass baskets and a mortar and pestle for grinding acorns. The amazing relationship between the white oak and the Kalapuya people shown in this exhibit is an example of how symbiotic relationships between humans and nature are entirely possible and beneficial. I highly recommend taking the time to see the new exhibit this August!

In addition, **Chachalu Tribal Museum and Cultural Center** in Grand Ronde is another great destination. It is just an hour drive from Sherwood and could be visited en route to or from the coast. The museum and center opened in 2016 after being converted from an elementary and later middle school in 2011.

The round entry way is an intriguing start to exploring the museum. There is space for outdoor lectures and many classrooms for field trips during the school year., and “wide variety of classes and lectures throughout the year, from traditional basketry to native plant use and identification” (quoted from the brochure). There is a library for research and a small gallery to the left at the entrance with current, changing exhibits. Interwoven with the artifacts are plaques depicting stories handed down for generations. It is very important to keep those stories alive as they represent the teachings and beliefs of the people.

The reddish cedar dugout canoe is an example of impressive craftsmanship, as are the intricately woven baskets. I love how, throughout the museum, there are large black and white photographs of ancestors of Grand Ronde tribal members living their lives. It brings them closer to the viewer, with the realization these artifacts are from a living culture from the past that are still very much alive today. It personalizes the experience when you realize they smiled, dreamed, had families, and yearned to belong...just like everyone else on the planet.

There are numerous displays that are superbly informative, such as one about *Traditional Foods*. The lovely Camas flower provided bulbs that were used in baking. Wapato tubers were another excellent source of nutrition that is known as the “Indian Potato.” Ground Acorn was a steady staple as gruel or bread and Tarweed, a kind of wild sunflower, provided tasty seeds. And the wealth of berries in the Willamette Valley were eaten fresh and stored for winter. There is a renewed interest today by tribes to re-establish “first foods” by harvesting and growing these plants. The wisdom of indigenous people may aid us in ushering in a new era of rethinking the importance of local food and sustainable agriculture.

The panel about *Ancestral Basketry of Western Oregon* is clear and concise, depicting the variety of styles, patterns, and material of the western regions. In Willamette Valley: “Types of basketry include bowls, trays, pack baskets, seed beaters, and hats” (quoted from the display). I found it absolutely fascinating all the similarities and yet distinct differences between the areas of western Oregon. In a center display, woven baskets in various stages of creation inform the viewer about the method and challenges of the art of basket weaving.

Delving a little deeper into our past can provide our community with a greater sense of who we are. It matters to acknowledge and honor those who once—and still—called Sherwood “home.”

Please visit my website listed below for website links, addresses, and information about the three aforementioned museums, a pdf of this article, and more photos.
www.MarianneBickett.com

Note:

I wish to thank Mark Miller for this opportunity to write for the good people of Sherwood the monthly *Things to Do* column.

Also, a huge Thank you to Aron Wagoner and Mariah Berlanga-Shevchuk of the *Five Oaks Museum* and Dakota Zimmer of the *Chachalu Museum* for vital help with the facts of this article and for the quotes, and photos/captions. **Photo credit for the oak trees: Earliest known photo of the Five Oaks Historic Site, circa 1925. Photographer unknown. Five Oaks Museum Collection.**

Enjoy these golden days of August and the soon arrival of autumn on its heels.
With Heartfelt Gratitude!
Marianne Bickett

www.MarianneBickett.com

Sherwood Heritage Center

22552 Park Street in the Veteran's Memorial Park.

<https://sites.google.com/view/sherwood-historical-society/home>

Five Oaks Museum

PCC Rock Creek Campus

17677 NW Springville Road

Portland

<https://fiveoaksmuseum.org/>

Chachalu Tribal Museum and Cultural Center

9615 Grand Ronde Road

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<https://www.grandronde.org/history-culture/culture/chachalu-museum-and-cultural-center/>