

W I L D H O R S E R E S O R T C A S I N O

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For Immediate Release

Tamástslikt Cultural Institute Brings Musical Voice from Past To Public Performance

Pendleton, OR - A voice from the past with connections to the Lewis and Clark expedition of 200 years ago will sing again during a presentation on his music at Tamástslikt Cultural Institute, Tuesday, Nov. 8 at 4 p.m. The program is free and open to the public.

Native Americans, including those on the Umatilla Reservation, sing many songs that their ancestors sang centuries ago, songs that celebrate warriors' victories, a successful hunt, or a myriad of special events, such as the meeting between the Nez Perce Tribe and the Lewis and Clark expedition 200 years ago. One such singer was Sol Webb, a Nez Perce singer who lived in the Thornhollow area on the Umatilla Reservation.

In the early 1970's Loran Olsen, a member of the Washington State University music faculty, recorded many songs sung by Webb, then 90-years-old, preserving the stories behind the songs, as well as Webb's personal story. The recordings were part of a larger program by Olsen, who, from 1970 to 1993, researched the music of Native Americans extensively, especially those of the Pacific Northwest.

Some of the most significant songs Webb recorded are Nez Perce prophecy songs heard by Webb's grandfather in the 1820's. These cryptic songs had anticipated the arrival of powerful new humans; of a heavenly book; of changes to the earth; of cattle, plows and fences; of punishment to the native people; and of disrespect to elders. His grandfather also sang to Webb the parade song he remembered from the 1855 Treaty Council, for he was a signer of that Treaty.

"He wanted them to be for educational purposes only," said Olsen, speaking from his home in Port Angeles, Washington. Although retired he continues his involvement with Native music of North America. Referring to Webb's music he said, "The legacy primarily comes from his grandfather, Weptestema'na', a friend of Old Chief Joseph and a signer of the 1855 Treaty" for the Nez Perce.

Webb's paternal great-grandfather, Tuyiihin, was a single man when Lewis and Clark arrived among the Nez Perce. His grandfather Weptestema'na (Eagle Feathers in a Row) was born about ten years later. Webb's paternal grandfather was Hyuumpakatemna (Grizzly Bear with Five Hearts), also know as "Old Man Halfmoon".

"Songs and stories bequeathed to Webb from these men constitute our oldest direct audio connection to the early 1800's," noted Olsen.

Webb was bilingual, having been educated by the Jesuits near Slickpoo Mission in Idaho. According to Olsen “his singing voice remained true at 90, his drumming hand was steady and his memory clear. He had taken an active part in various Indian celebrations as a drummer and singer in Lapwai, Grangeville, Moscow and Spokane from 1906 to 1928. His drumming companions included John Hayes, Bill Moody, Carter, Red Thunder, Jackson Sundown, John Moses, Luke Cowapoo, Lucien Williams and Ike Patrick.

Olsen will make his presentation, “A Legacy from Sol Webb” with slides and music, while telling the stories behind the music, assisted by relatives of Webb.

Olsen’s varied activities included field trips to document Native traditions in Alaska, British Columbia, Washington, Oregon, Idaho and Montana; the production of educational media in close collaboration with Native tradition bearers; the scholarly examination of published and unpublished written materials; collecting, editing, organizing, and documenting his own and previously existing sound recordings; developing and teaching courses in Native music at Washington State University; and giving lectures and workshops in various public forums.

In addition to producing a body of primary source material, he also collected a variety of secondary materials that more broadly document the culture and life of North America's native peoples.