

## In the garden of our ancestors

### Group spends the day honoring the history of Euphoria Ridge

By Anne Niblett  
Newsletter Editor

Speaking with an intensity and reverence imbibed from the land she walked on, Fauna Larkin instructed the little one at her side:

“This is a special place that your ancestors have been coming to for ever and ever,” she said, as she made her way along the grassy hillside trail at Euphoria Ridge. “It’s special for Mama, Auntie La-la, and all these people here. It’s special for you, too.”

With bright eyes and an open heart, Fauna Beth took in the gravity of the moment from the safety of her mother’s embrace.

Each spring, the Tribe makes a sojourn to this sacred parcel of land within the Coquille Forest. On this landscape, our ancestors carefully nurtured the abundant camas that was an important part of their diet.

Euphoria Ridge is located on the northern side of the Middle Fork of the Coquille River at Bridge, Ore. Chief Washington Tom and his band of Coquille Indians, who lived at Myrtle Point, managed this land for its resources. As one of the 14 parcels that make up the Coquille Forest today, Euphoria Ridge was specifically requested by the Tribe as part of the Coquille Forest Act because of its known cultural significance.

Euphoria Ridge got its name from a member of a mountain biking club that worked with the Lone Rock Timber Co. and the Bureau of Land Management to create biking trails throughout the area. ATVs, motorbikes and four-wheelers eventually crowded the area alongside the mountain bikers. When ownership transferred to the Coquille Tribe in 1996, gates were set up to stop the flow of wheeled traffic.

Today, in addition to appreciating Euphoria Ridge’s cultural value, the Tribe uses the land’s economic assets as well.

Speaking to the crowd that had gathered to dig camas, Chief Don Ivy said Euphoria Ridge demonstrates “the suite of values” for which the Tribe manages its forest.



Photo by Fauna Larkin

Two-and-a-half-year-old Tribal member Fauna Beth Larkin frolics through a field of camas flowers on a hillside at Euphoria Ridge.

First, he said, “There’s the economic value of the timber production.”

Second: the cultural values of the natural landscape and native plants. “Besides camas, there’s iris and biscuit root, huckleberries in the fall and hazels shoots in the springtime.”

And finally: “the social values that attach for us – to be on our own land, under our own rules, our own people, doing our own thing, without having to ask someone else permission for it.”

At the camas field, several people gathered around the Chief for a lesson on harvesting the treasured bulb.

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“It’s an important food crop from Southern British Columbia to Northern California, clear to the Rockies. Camas is important to Nez Perce people and coastal people and everybody in between.”

Kneeling with a tool in hand, he further explained, “I use the pitchfork rather than the shovel, because it’s a little wider dig, and most of the time I don’t have to lift a lot of dirt.”

Much later, after the camas was dug and the group had enjoyed a barbecue meal, several Tribal members sat in a circle of chairs on the grass. They peeled the outer layers from the camas bulbs, getting them ready for a Restoration Celebration meal. Good-natured ribbing ensued, and soon the work became play.

Coquille people were on their ancestral lands, doing what they had done for thousands of years. Our ancestors would be proud.

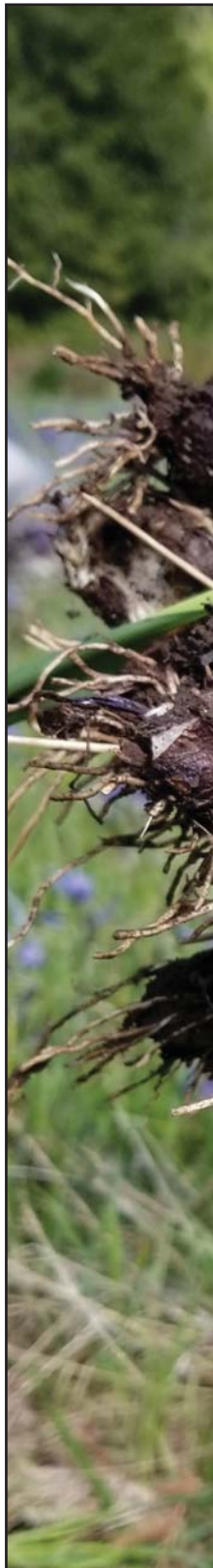
**Right:** Chief Don Ivy passes on historical knowledge.

**Middle:** Freshly harvested camas bulbs

**Below:** The camas digging group

**Far right top:** Tribal family and staff enjoy the view as they listen to the history of the land explained by Chief Ivy.

**Far right below:** Kristi Myers and Makyra Meade enjoy the beauty of the day while digging.



# Dun-ne\* /the heart place

\* Southwest Oregon Athabaskan  
for "the people of the place"



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## Check out the video

Want to know more about digging camas? Watch our new video on MyTribe: <https://portal.coquilletribe.org/>.