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# Archives of Native Presence: Land Tenure Research on the Grand Ronde Reservation

*Ian Kretzler*

Over the past two decades, the development of indigenous and collaborative archaeologies has placed archaeologists' relationships with local and descendant communities under scrutiny. Scholars increasingly recognize archaeology's links to colonial projects and its role in the marginalization of indigenous groups.<sup>1</sup> Research strategies that share or cede decision-making authority to community partners have been proposed as a remedy to historical injustices and a path toward mutually beneficial research outcomes.<sup>2</sup> The contributions of these approaches have been particularly prominent in studies investigating the ways indigenous communities responded to, accommodated, and resisted European and American colonial intrusion.<sup>3</sup>

Although this research program represents progress in archaeology toward more diverse and ethically accountable work, projects spearheaded by academic archaeologists remain overrepresented. Less attention has been devoted to the hundreds of cultural protection programs within tribal nations, especially Tribal Historic Preservation Offices (THPOs). These programs forward expansive conceptions of historical significance that center Native knowledge systems and community interests, all while satisfying regulatory requirements under the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) and related statutes. The diversity of tribes' cultural protection work precludes a single definition of "tribal" or "indigenous" archaeology. Rather, they constitute many unique archaeologies, united by their commitment to historic preservation that reflects and contributes to the cultural lifeways of the tribal nation. These

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archaeologies contrast with the materialist approaches that dominate the historic preservation industry, which privilege object- and site-centered evaluations of historical significance and rely on excavation and other invasive forms of mitigation.<sup>4</sup>

This article argues that tribal historic preservation provides needed insight to all heritage managers regardless of their affiliation. To agency personnel and consultants within the historic preservation industry, tribal historic preservation emphasizes the cultural and interpretive value of tribally driven archival research, GIS analysis, and low-impact fieldwork as a precursor to or replacement of invasive mitigation strategies. To academic archaeologists, especially those advocating greater dialogue with indigenous knowledge systems, tribal historic preservation demonstrates that enhancing our knowledge of past communities and protecting heritage in culturally meaningful ways are not separate goals but mutually reinforcing ones.

As an example of tribal historic preservation in practice, I discuss the approach and findings of the Grand Ronde Land Tenure Project, developed by the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde Historic Preservation Office. The project has four goals: (1) utilize Grand Ronde conceptions of time, place, and cultural practice to repurpose the colonial archive for the benefit of the tribal nation; (2) expand the tribe's collection of historic spatial and documentary data; (3) analyze these data to better understand early reservation settlement patterns; and (4) assess changes in Native land ownership from the passage of the Dawes Act through the mid-twentieth century.

This project enhances the capacity of the Historic Preservation Office to care for cultural resources on tribal and ancestral lands. Acquired maps and associated documents will support new lines of inquiry into Grand Ronde history and the ways reservation residents negotiated government policies in the decades following removal. They will also aid in the protection of historic structures and cultural landscapes ahead of economic development. GIS analysis of allotment information will contribute to efforts to reacquire parcels within the boundaries of the original reservation and complement ongoing low-impact archaeological investigations of past reservation lifeways.

## TOWARD INDIGENOUS ARCHAEOLOGIES THROUGH TRIBAL HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Since the 1970s, tribes have used cultural protection programs to spearhead a range of historic preservation initiatives, including protection of archaeological sites and landscapes, establishment of tribal archives, care for repatriated human remains and funerary objects, and development of working partnerships with state and federal agencies.<sup>5</sup> Amendments to the NHPA in 1992 established the THPO program, allowing federally recognized tribes to assume the cultural protection responsibilities of the State Historic Preservation Office on tribal lands. Currently, 171 THPOs oversee historic preservation on over fifty million acres of tribal land in thirty states.<sup>6</sup> Through these programs, tribes have forwarded new approaches to caring for important places and landscapes. For many tribes, archaeological sites, artifacts, and other forms of tangible heritage have value not only because of what they reveal about past

groups, but because of the relationships between people, places, and activities they represent.<sup>7</sup> This translates in practice to an emphasis on protection, avoidance, and restoration of archaeological sites and minimizing the impacts of archaeological investigation on the physical and spiritual well-being of tribal communities.<sup>8</sup>

Yet tribes' cultural protection efforts are not limited to archaeology, nor are they constrained by conventional disciplinary boundaries. THPOs contribute to ethnographic research, cultural education, and the protection of natural and cultural resources (an arbitrary divide for many tribes). For those heritage professionals who associate historic preservation with archaeology alone, THPOs present an alternative approach that centers the perspectives of those most likely to be affected by development projects. Academic and private-sector archaeologists increasingly realize that incorporating these perspectives into research design not only results in more comprehensive historical accounts, but also raises the relevance of archaeological research among non-practitioners.<sup>9</sup>

## HISTORIC PRESERVATION AT GRAND RONDE

Heritage managers at Grand Ronde advocate for the protection of cultural resources within the tribe's ceded territory, which encompasses fourteen million acres of western Oregon. The tribe's approach to historic preservation is exemplified by their work on traditional cultural properties, places that hold value to contemporary groups and must be considered during compliance-related consultations.<sup>10</sup> Preservation staff argue that overemphasis on tangible forms of material culture leads to narrow definitions of historical significance that minimize or erase links between place, history, and identity.<sup>11</sup> They call on heritage professionals to approach traditional cultural properties not "as an examination of nouns—places and things—but [to] begin by looking for verbs—actions and interactions."<sup>12</sup> The verbs of Native history do not necessarily leave physical traces and may be directed toward intangible aspects of peoples' cultural and spiritual lives. Understanding traditional cultural properties therefore cannot reference anthropological and archaeological scholarship alone but must also consider oral traditions and histories and *ikanum*: stories of "place in the past" that reveal the creation and ordering of the world.

This expansive conception of significance guides the Historic Preservation Office beyond traditional cultural properties. Under the NHPA's Section 106 process, staff consult with federal agencies on projects that may impact cultural resources in the tribe's ceded lands. During these discussions, they ensure that the federal government fulfills its responsibility to engage in meaningful consultation. For historic preservation staff, meaningful consultation extends beyond the life of a single project. It requires constructing long-term interpersonal relationships with agency personnel so as to foster understanding of the tribe's positions and goals. These relationships prove critical when, as is often the case, Grand Ronde ideas about significance and appropriate mitigation diverge from those espoused by their agency partners. While meaningful consultation does not always prevent physical, visual, or auditory impacts to places of

importance, the tribe's record of collaboration with agencies beyond base legal requirements attests to the value of such an approach.<sup>13</sup>

Historic preservation staff also contribute to projects within the Grand Ronde community. The tribe's Cultural Resources Department includes the Historic Preservation Office as well as the Cultural Education Program, the Cultural Interpretation Program, and the Chachalu Museum, an administrative structure that reflects a view of historic properties as inseparable from living traditions. Historic preservation staff regularly participate in other cultural programs and in those of other tribal departments. For example, the Historic Preservation Office has directed research on early reservation linguistic traditions, leading to the recovery of stories that speak to the creation of ancestral homelands and nineteenth-century life at Grand Ronde. Educators retell these stories in youth classrooms and community presentations, thereby strengthening tribal members' ties to landscapes and relatives of past generations.<sup>14</sup>

The Grand Ronde Land Tenure Project is an outgrowth of these initiatives. It protects tribal heritage and expands opportunities for researching tribal history by (1) critically analyzing data sets rooted in American colonialism; (2) expanding tribal archives; (3) investigating early reservation settlement patterns; and (4) assessing the impact of allotment on tribal land tenure.

## CONFRONTING COLONIAL LEGACIES IN TRIBALLY DRIVEN RESEARCH

Undertaking research on the history of the Grand Ronde Reservation requires engaging with maps, documents, and analytical tools crafted by non-Native individuals, often with the intent to surveil and otherwise "manage" the Grand Ronde community. They are not neutral depictions. At the same time, the Grand Ronde Land Tenure Project represents a commitment among historic preservation staff to repurpose this information—to place colonial data sets in the service of the tribal nation. It is an example of what Linda Tuhiwai Smith calls an indigenous project of remembering and celebration.<sup>15</sup> During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, allotment-fueled dispossession exacerbated the "constant stress" of reservation life, leading to declines in the reservation population, economic hardship, and strained ties to cultural landscapes.<sup>16</sup> This story, as difficult as it may be, must be fully documented—remembered—in order to fill the gaps in existing Grand Ronde historical accounts. But associating allotment exclusively with trauma and loss is an incomplete telling, one that erases the community's strategic engagement with the policy to safeguard their interests. This story of Grand Ronde survivance is cause for celebration. Allotment was implemented during a period in which a host of assimilationist forces conspired to terminate Native lifeways. The actions taken by the Grand Ronde community in this context call attention to the practices, relationships, and identities that were preserved rather than those that were lost.

Remembering and celebrating means training a critical eye on the colonial archive.<sup>17</sup> As Stoler argues, state-generated information about Native peoples constitutes both situated representations of Native lifeways and a system of knowledge production

whereby the creation, curation, and distribution of information sustained and justified the colonial project.<sup>18</sup> Maps, reports, and other forms of state-sanctioned knowledge functioned as cultural stages upon which government officials rehearsed and refined conceptions of Native peoples as in need of spatial isolation, cultural rehabilitation, and/or physical extermination. Scholars engaging with the colonial archive must grapple with these dual roles lest they unwittingly reproduce its semantic and ideological underpinnings. They must focus on content—what these sources emphasize and overlook about Native lifeways—in addition to discursive practices and norms such as the manner, media, and context in which authors wrote.

In western Oregon, the US government leveraged archival knowledge to control Native peoples well before the creation of the Grand Ronde Reservation. Beginning in the late eighteenth century, government officials deployed spatial and ethnographic observations to enact expansionist aspirations. The Corps of Discovery's navigation of the Columbia River, the manufacture of regional "tribes," the transfer of unceded Native lands to settlers via the Donation Land Act, and the extension of the township and range system to the Pacific Northwest were all designed to extend American territorial, political, and economic hegemony over the region's lands and resources.<sup>19</sup> Harley summarizes this process: "Insofar as maps were used in colonial promotion, and lands claimed on paper before they were effectively occupied, maps anticipated empire."<sup>20</sup>

Similar issues arise when these maps are imported into a GIS environment. GIS is predicated on a Euro-American conception of the natural world, enabling users to place ostensibly chaotic geospatial phenomena into bounded, hierarchical data sets. Many Native communities understand humans and nonhumans in relational terms and maintain modes of intergenerational knowledge transmission that recount the creation of and proper interaction with the environment. For these communities, GIS raises serious concerns. It risks flattening the complexity of Native spatial knowledge into static representations and undermining cultural practices that structure information access based on age, gender, or family.<sup>21</sup> These fears are not academic. Early uses of GIS within the Bureau of Indian Affairs failed to consider tribes' interests in managing land and resources.<sup>22</sup>

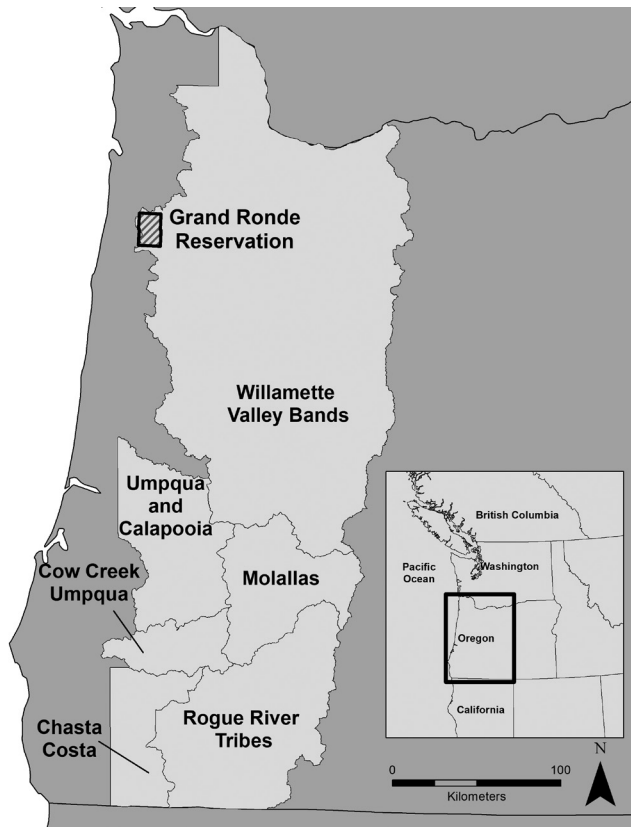
Even so, GIS has emerged as a crucial tool for tribes. A growing body of literature discusses the value of GIS for preserving cultural heritage, managing natural resources, securing land and water rights, and economic and health care planning.<sup>23</sup> The Grand Ronde Historic Preservation Office has used GIS to document historical and contemporary resource gathering locations, create story maps visualizing the travels of South Wind, and collaborate with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to model paleo-shorelines potentially used by western Oregon Native communities during the Pleistocene. Through these projects, historic preservation staff share, preserve, and learn from Grand Ronde knowledge while implementing culturally appropriate controls regarding information-sharing and access. Their efforts may be described as examples of "counter mapping" whereby the tools of colonialism are appropriated to meet community-defined needs.<sup>24</sup> The Grand Ronde Land Tenure Project reiterates the tribe's commitment to "counter mapping." Project data carry the "weight of histories of dispossession, disappearance, and displacement."<sup>25</sup> But by

examining these sources critically, with an eye toward what they said and did not say about Grand Ronde residents, new historical insights may be revealed.

### *Fostering New Accounts of Reservation History*

Competing perspectives on land use, settlement, and ownership are a common theme in the history of the Grand Ronde Reservation. Originally encompassing 61,000 acres, the reservation was established by executive order in 1857 after the negotiation of seven treaties with western Oregon Native communities (fig. 1). The previous winter, the US government forcibly removed approximately two thousand people to the reservation on Oregon's Trail of Tears. Though treaties describe Grand Ronde as a "permanent home," over the next century federal policies directly and indirectly transferred swaths of land to Euro-American settlers. The legacy of these policies is a fragmented tribal land base of 13,600 acres.

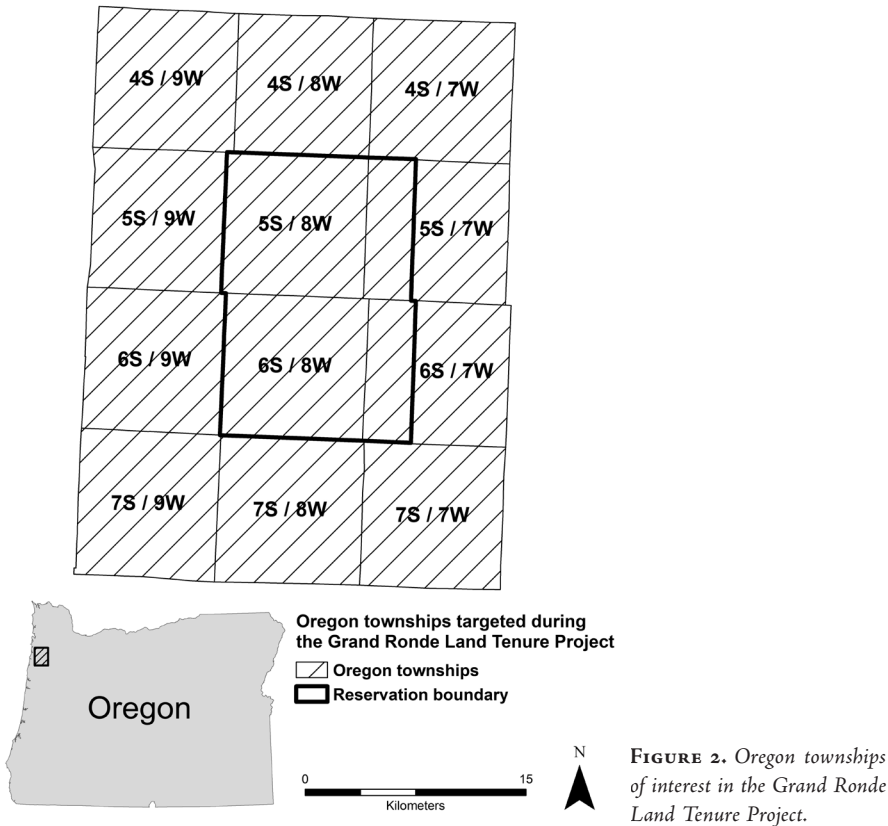
The Grand Ronde Land Tenure Project originated with a desire to better understand this history. Previous historical research within the tribe focused on the cultural, linguistic, and political aspects of reservation life during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.<sup>26</sup> Spatial data was largely missing from these projects. The second goal of



**FIGURE 1.** *Western Oregon land ceded under seven 1850s treaties and the original boundaries of the Grand Ronde Reservation.*

the Grand Ronde Land Tenure Project was to identify and acquire maps and associated documents located in government, university, and historical society archives that depicted townships within and immediately surrounding the original boundaries of the reservation (fig. 2).

Due to capacity limitations—the five-person Historic Preservation Office receives over four thousand correspondences with federal agencies per year—staff requested that I implement the bulk of the project. This request was based on my familiarity with GIS and involvement with the then-in-development Field Methods in Indigenous Archaeology training program, a community-based research partnership between the Historic Preservation Office and the University of Washington.<sup>27</sup> In 2014–2015, I identified forty-seven maps and hundreds of pages of allotment records, survey reports, and related documents that were unknown to historic preservation staff. I obtained high-resolution scans of each map and georeferenced each one within ArcMap. I digitized all identifiable parcels and recorded parcel ownership, structures present, land type, and other relevant attributes. All map images and GIS layers are now part of the Grand Ronde archive.



**FIGURE 2.** Oregon townships of interest in the Grand Ronde Land Tenure Project.



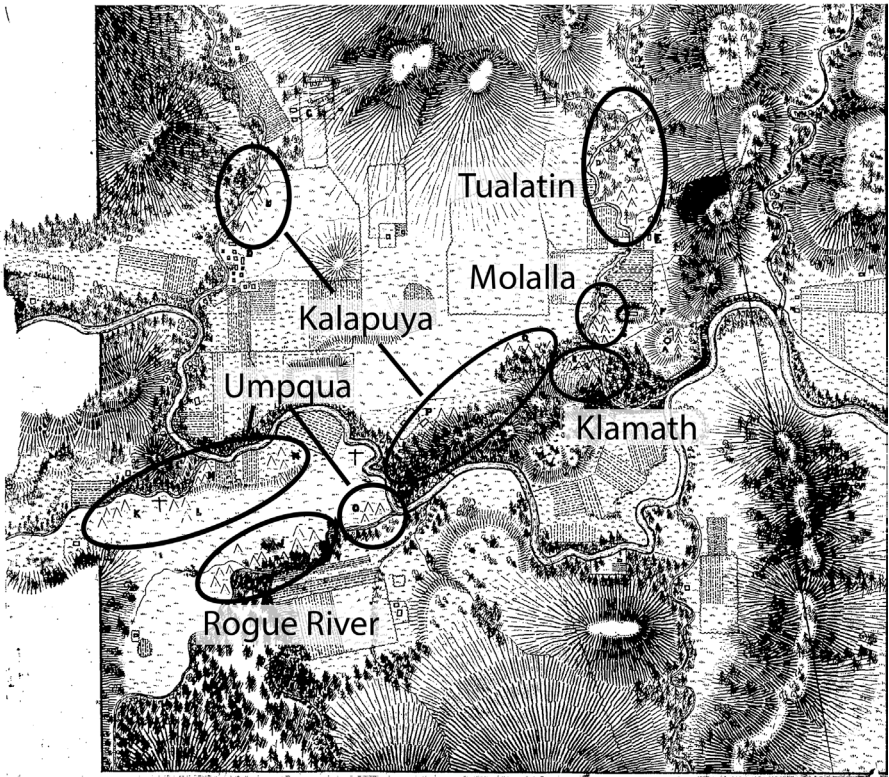
## *Settlement Patterns on The Grand Ronde Reservation, 1855–1889*

This geospatial database was then used to explore the location and group composition of early reservation settlements. Historic preservation staff proposed this analysis to investigate how the Grand Ronde community responded to removal. The reservation's founding population maintained diverse cultural practices and spoke at least eight languages. Removal brought these peoples together on a foreign landscape, forcing them to live alongside allies, rivals, and strangers while under the surveillance of reservation agents and military personnel. If decisions regarding settlement location and composition were made by tribal members—and during the reservation's early decades, this appears to have been the case—then these may be read as one response to the challenges presented by removal.

It is important, however, to first situate reservation settlements into a broader temporal context. In the centuries preceding Euro-American arrival, western Oregon settlement patterns were tied to seasonal availability of resources and inter-kin group relationships. During the winter, extended families took up residence in autonomous, semi-permanent villages situated along waterways. Villages contained one or more households of related families and ranged in size from a few people to several hundred. In the summer months, village residents dispersed into resource-harvesting groups. Travel to fishing, gathering, and hunting areas placed families in contact with those from other winter villages, providing opportunities to strengthen political and social ties via marriage and trade. Marriage patterns were exogamous, with wives generally relocating to the winter village of their husband. These women added linguistic and cultural diversity to their new homes and often served as ambassadors and translators between those of their natal villages and their husbands' residences. Affiliation with a particular village did not prevent individuals from strategically emphasizing ties with other groups or relocating to other villages as they saw fit. The diversity of individuals' familial ties made group membership flexible. Western Oregon settlements served as one marker of Native identity, but they were not synonymous with discrete "tribes."<sup>28</sup>

For the Euro-American explorers, traders, and early settlers who described Native groups along tribal lines, cultural accuracy was less important than political expediency. For Euro-Americans, tribal ethnonyms simplified a complex and unfamiliar landscape. They also furthered the colonial project. For decades, settlers in the Willamette Valley and along the Columbia River relied on Native groups for provisions, brokering trade deals, and transportation.<sup>29</sup> As the settler population increased in the 1840s, so too did calls for Native removal. Realizing this goal required disentangling Native groups from their homelands, physically and culturally. As Gooding writes: "[ethnonyms] initiated a decontextualization of indigenous identity, a remapping from indigenous into tribal terms."<sup>30</sup> They transformed western Oregon from a Native place in which connections to land hinged on familial, linguistic, and ecological relationships to a Euro-American place defined by sociopolitical units with title to specific tracts. The federal government relied on these political inventions during the treaty negotiation process to acquire western Oregon lands in exchange for the Grand Ronde Reservation.

Tribal ethnonyms followed western Oregon Native groups to the reservation. The first post-removal map of Grand Ronde indicates that the founding reservation population established band- and tribe-specific encampments along the South Yamhill River in the east central area of the reservation (fig. 3). The map's author, Oregon newcomer Lieutenant William Hazen, likely had little understanding of the region's cultural diversity. The encampments more likely represent groups of extended families with one or more primary languages and seasonal rounds tied to particular regions. Given what these communities had recently experienced—land seizures under the Donation Land Act, environmental degradation, and the Rogue River War in southwestern Oregon—the establishment of familiar habitation groups is not surprising. More notable is that familial relationships appear to have determined settlement location as well as composition. Native communities with ties to northwestern Oregon (“Kalapuya” and “Tualatin” on fig. 3) settled north of those with ties to southwestern Oregon (“Rogue River” and “Umpqua”) and west of those with ties to the Cascade Mountains and eastern Oregon (“Molalla” and “Klamath”). The South Yamhill River, which tribal members later described as a cultural and linguistic boundary, divided



**FIGURE 3.** *The Hazen Map, showing the distribution of western Oregon Native groups on the Grand Ronde Reservation, ca. 1856.*

the northern and southern groups.<sup>31</sup> At the landscape scale, encampments established a cultural, political, and economic microcosm of pre-reservation western Oregon. In doing so, they undermined the principles of federal control upon which the reservation was predicated, guaranteeing that the relationships that structured Native lifeways for millennia would continue to do so.

Unfortunately, little else is known about these encampments or other early reservation settlements. During the reservation's first three decades, agents repeatedly highlighted residents' construction of Euro-American style homes. In the assimilating mission of the reservation, houses served as proxies for Native "progress." Log or timber frame cabins "improved" the land and encouraged desirable habits such as Euro-American gendered divisions of labor, nuclear family structures, and agricultural production. In 1873, Agent Sinnott asserted that "it would be difficult to find [in] any community, of the same number, a more industrious people."<sup>32</sup> Four years later, he remarked that Grand Ronde homes exhibited few differences, inside or out, to those of Euro-American settlers.<sup>33</sup> By 1887, 104 Euro-American style homes had been built on the reservation.<sup>34</sup> Residents appear to have been unable, due to explicit sanction and/or lack of material or labor, to construct plankhouses or pithouses, common dwellings in pre-reservation Oregon.

At the same time agents also provided evidence for the persistence of pre-reservation cultural practices. Sinnott recounted that houses were arranged in clusters and contained multiple families, up to fifty people per dwelling.<sup>35</sup> They were not occupied year-round, but functioned primarily as winter residences, with families pursuing economic opportunities and attending cultural gatherings off-reservation during the summer months.<sup>36</sup> Whatever their outward appearance, Grand Ronde homes continued to function as physical manifestations of social ties within and between families.

### *Allotment and Its Aftermath, 1889–1954*

The fourth goal of the Grand Ronde Land Tenure Project centered on documenting changes in Native land ownership in the wake of the General Allotment or Dawes Act. Historic preservation staff knew the policy was responsible for the loss of thousands of reservation acres but were unsure of allotments' original distribution and the pace of dispossession, both through time and across space. They proposed GIS analysis of acquired maps and documents to assess the policy's impact.

The Dawes Act of 1887 was passed amid mounting criticism that the federal reservation system was failing to assimilate Native peoples into Euro-American society. On reservations, Native communities grappled with a host of challenges, to say nothing of the traumas of removal and the violence and epidemics that often preceded it. Yet they also found a degree of freedom to refashion cultural practices and identities. The persistence of Native social and political systems, combined with pressure to make reservation lands available to growing settler populations, prompted legislators to explore reservation "reform." Allotment provided a solution. By fragmenting

reservations into privately owned plots, federal officials hoped to undermine ties between Native individuals, groups, and landscapes.

Under the act, single individuals received 80 acres of land, married heads of households 160 acres, and children under eighteen 40 acres. If a reservation lacked sufficient agricultural land, individuals would receive larger tracts deemed suitable for grazing. Reservations were to be allotted at the president's discretion. Provisions requiring allotment to be met with approval from tribal members were struck from early versions of the bill. To prevent, or merely delay, exposing reservation land to market forces, allotments were to be held in trust for twenty-five years. Allottees could not lease, sell, or will their land until the trust period expired, after which they would receive a fee simple patent and American citizenship.

To its backers, the Dawes Act fit into a tripartite effort to assimilate Native peoples—culturally, legally, and economically.<sup>37</sup> Reservation schools and, beginning in the 1880s and 1890s, off-reservation boarding schools furthered cultural assimilation.<sup>38</sup> This is clear in the schools' guiding mission, which centered less on providing academic educations than on suppressing attachments to languages and cultural practices and replacing them with "proper" habits, gender roles, and religious beliefs. Allotment furthered legal and economic assimilation. Lawmakers and reservation agents lauded the ostensible power of private property ownership to discourage communal economic and social activities. Tethering individuals to specific plots forced otherwise "lazy" Native individuals to develop a productive agricultural land base and adopt sedentary lifestyles. In the words of Agent Gaither, who oversaw the Siletz Reservation near Grand Ronde, "I believe that allotting [tribes'] land in severalty will do more to inspire them with a pride of ownership and build them up more rapidly than any one thing that can be done for them."<sup>39</sup> Upon demonstrating their commitment to improving the land, allottees would be granted citizenship, thereby integrating them into the nation's body politic. Through allotment, the "Indians' Magna Carta," Native peoples would be emancipated from their tribal nations and remade into atomized American citizens.<sup>40</sup>

Inextricably linked to this assimilationist program was an effort to extend the United States' spatial dominion over Native lands. Greenwald argues that allotment was rooted in a prolonged agenda of constraining patterns of movement, residence, and land division within Native communities, what she terms "spatial control."<sup>41</sup> Indeed, allotment did not constitute new policy in the late 1880s but had been part of treaty negotiations and reservation management for decades. At Grand Ronde, informal twenty-acre allotments were handed out in the early 1870s. Agents reported that the benefits of allotment "are clearly shown in the satisfaction of the Indians, their industry, habits, and manifest desire to improve in every way."<sup>42</sup> But because tribal members did not hold title to their parcels, they provided little long-term security.

With the Dawes Act and its amendments, the federal government laid a path toward individual Native land ownership. It also set the stage for widespread dispossession. The act stipulated that all reservation land not awarded to tribal members be declared "surplus" and made available for purchase to non-Native parties. Since allotments were all that was required to develop an economic land base, lawmakers reasoned, leftover reservation land was of little benefit to the tribe. This position

overlooked economic opportunities such as tribal ownership and management of tracts with timber or ranching potential and the fact that “surplus lands” could far exceed those allotted, depending on the size of the reservation and tribal community. This was the case at Siletz. After allotment, nearly 80 percent of the 225,300-acre reservation, much of it prime timber land, was declared surplus.<sup>43</sup>

Federal control over Native land expanded during the early twentieth century. In 1902, the “Dead Indian Act” endowed the secretary of the Interior with the power to settle the growing problem of heirship allotments, those held in trust when the original allottee died. Since allotments could not be willed, the secretary could sell the parcels and divide the proceeds among allottees’ heirs or partition the land to heirs with trust or fee patents. The Burke Act of 1906 allowed the secretary to award fee simple patents to allottees deemed “competent” to manage their land. These decisions were made regardless of allottees’ wishes and at times without their knowledge. Full land ownership benefited some individuals, but many more were unable to pay the property taxes that then accrued, leading to widespread foreclosures and sales. The following year, Congress extended to the secretary the power to sell the allotments of “non-competent” allottees. Hoxie notes that while this statute was written in reference to specific disabilities, the commissioner of Indian Affairs encouraged reservation agents to interpret the policy liberally. “Such sophistry,” Hoxie concludes, “had a single purpose: the rapid sale of as many homesteads as possible.”<sup>44</sup>

By the time the Indian Reorganization Act formally ended allotment in 1934, 118 reservations had been subjected to the policy. Surplus declarations claimed roughly sixty million acres of Native land. Of the forty million acres allotted, nearly twenty-seven million were sold under various policies. The fragmentation of communally owned parcels disrupted rather than accelerated Native farming operations and led to widespread land fractionation that continues to vex tribal communities.<sup>45</sup> All told, between 1887 and 1934 allotment and related land cessions led to the loss of approximately 60 percent of all Native land.<sup>46</sup>

Though the scale of dispossession during this period was severe, Greenwald cautions that to cast Native communities solely as victims of allotment overlooks the ways they creatively navigated the allotment process and, in many cases, bent this assimilationist program to support tribes’ interests.<sup>47</sup> Allotment did not affect tribes equally, nor were its effects preordained or instantaneous. It played out over time amid competing agendas between eastern politicians ostensibly interested in the welfare of Native groups and western politicians who viewed reservations as obstacles to land development.

These political positions ran up against the motivations of reservation communities seeking to preserve cultural practices and ensure access to economic opportunities and resources. Tribes’ goals influenced their position on the policy. Some actively lobbied the government to allot their reservations, believing that situating land tenure with individuals would provide greater security compared to government oversight. For residents of Siletz, whose 1.1 million-acre land base in 1856 had been reduced to 225,000 acres despite their protests, allotment presented an attractive alternative.<sup>48</sup> Others, such as the Seneca, worried about the potential for dispossession and successfully received exemptions from the Dawes Act. And when allotment agents arrived on

reservations, tribes played a key role in implementation. Federal guidelines instructed agents to allow reservation residents to select their own allotments, which would preferably include “improvements” such as agricultural fields or homes. As a result, allotment often did little but formalize existing settlement and economic systems.<sup>49</sup>

The key point is that allotment’s impact on Native communities nationwide reveals little about the policy’s on-the-ground implementation. Shifting the scale of analysis to specific reservations complicates the celebratory rhetoric of politicians preserved in documentary sources. It highlights how allotment, despite the challenges it would later bring, initially strengthened the practices politicians sought to disrupt.

### *Allotment of the Grand Ronde Reservation*

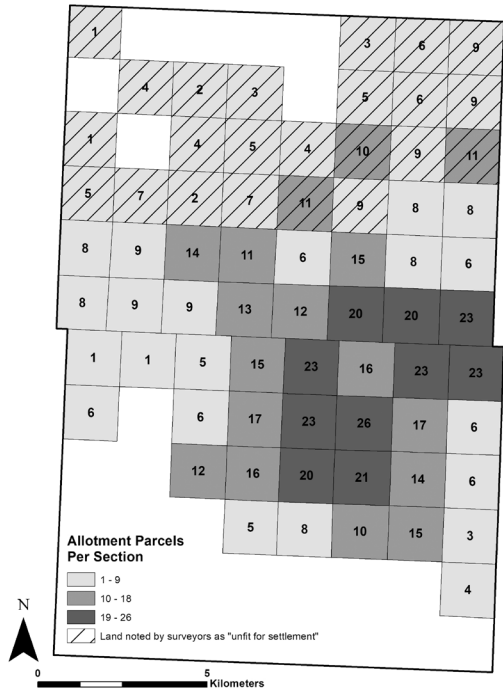
Because its residents were “known to be generally favorable” to the Dawes Act, the Grand Ronde Reservation was among the first group to be selected for allotment.<sup>50</sup> Allotting Agent Collins arrived on the reservation in June 1889. By year’s end, the 61,000-acre reservation had been divided into 269 allotments comprising 683 parcels and 33,000 acres. The discrepancy between allotments and parcels suggests that the reservation population was sufficiently clustered so as to prevent awarding the required amount of land and to prefer individuals’ existing improvements. The experience of tribal member John Kelly was common. He received 60 acres in the central reservation, likely encompassing agricultural land and/or his existing residence, as well as 160 acres located in the forested uplands to the north.

The number and average size of Grand Ronde allotment parcels per square mile are shown in figures 4 and 5. Parcels are not evenly distributed. They increase in size and decrease in density with distance from the east central reservation. This area contained agency buildings, provided easiest access to Euro-American settlements in the Willamette Valley, and included the bulk of the reservation’s arable land. It is also the area settled by the reservation’s founding community, depicted in figure 3. Assuming that the density of parcels within each section serves as an approximation of population distribution, figure 4 indicates that the reservation’s population and agricultural hub in the 1850s persisted as such into the late 1880s.

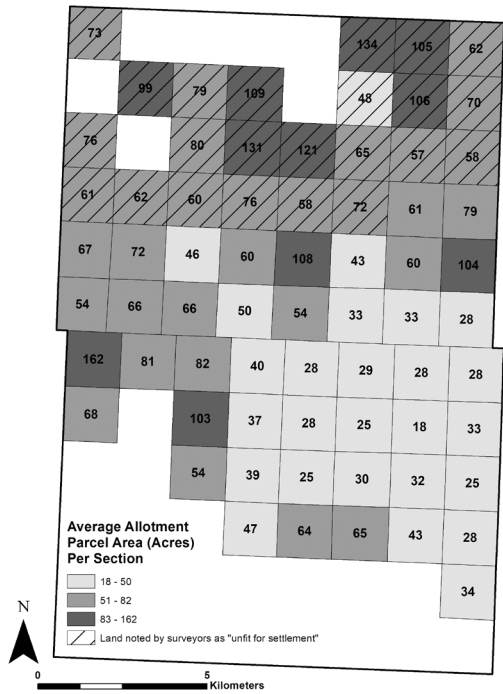
Figures 4 and 5 also show the extent to which Grand Ronde residents were allotted land with little economic utility. Roughly 12 percent by number and 20 percent by acreage of allotment parcels were located in areas surveyors described in 1887 as “unfit for settlement.” Most of this land was steep and densely forested. It may have included valuable hunting, fishing, or gathering locations but was generally unprofitable within a Euro-American market economy. Furthermore, the fragmentation of collectively owned land left individuals unable to take advantage of the land’s timber value. For many allottees, tracts in the reservation’s uplands comprised the bulk of their allotment. It is unsurprising that over the next three decades, many chose to sell. By the 1930s, most of these parcels had passed into the hands of timber companies.

The initial distribution of Grand Ronde allotment parcels can be combined with cultural affiliation information to shed light on reservation settlement patterns. Allotment records provide a single tribal affiliation for each allottee. Whether the

**FIGURE 4.** Number of allotment parcels per square mile of the Grand Ronde Reservation, 1889.



**FIGURE 5.** Average size in acres of allotment parcels per square mile of the Grand Ronde Reservation, 1889.



allotting agent solicited affiliation from individuals or assigned it using reservation censuses or other sources of information is unknown. If the former, individuals may have strategically associated themselves with specific groups to secure land near extended family members. In either case, single tribal affiliations and the absence of many women from allotment records—among married couples, only husbands’ tribal affiliation was noted—obscures the complexity of reservation group association. The issue is further complicated by the inconsistent specificity of ethnonyms used by agents. They generally described groups from the Willamette Valley along “band” lines (e.g., “Santiam” and “Mary’s River”) and used broader “tribal” categories (e.g., “Rogue River”) for the linguistically and culturally diverse groups from southwestern Oregon. To mitigate these problems, I placed allottees into larger regional interaction groups composed of “bands” and “tribes” with shared linguistic traditions, marriage patterns, cultural practices, and regions of residence and resource harvest. This process, conducted in collaboration with historic preservation staff, is summarized in table 1.

TABLE 1  
GRAND RONDE ALLOTTEE AFFILIATIONS

Tribal Affiliation on Allotment Card	Regional Interaction Group	Ancestral Homeland Group
Calapooia	Kalapuya	
Luckiamute	Kalapuya	
Mary’s River	Kalapuya	
Santiam	Kalapuya	
Yamhill	Kalapuya	North
Yoncalla	Kalapuya	
Wapato Lake	Kalapuya	
Clackamas	Chinook	
Clawiwalla	Chinook	
Tillamook	Tillamook	
Cow Creek	Umpqua	
Rogue River	Rogue River	South
Shasta	Shasta	
Umpqua	Umpqua	
Molalla	Molalla	East
Klamath	Klamath	
Iroquois	Other	Other



Individual allotment parcels, symbolized according to allottees' regional interaction groups, are shown in figure 6. Again, parcels appear clustered, suggesting that allottees preferentially selected land near those with whom they maintained familial (or other) relationships. This visual pattern is confirmed when assessing parcel spatial autocorrelation. Spatial autocorrelation is a measure of covariance between features based on geographic distribution and attribute information. It evaluates the null hypothesis—that inputted features are randomly distributed—via the Moran's Index, which ranges from -1.0 to 1.0. An index value approaching 1.0 indicates that features with similar attribute information are spatially clustered; a value approaching -1.0 points to feature dispersal. Measuring spatial autocorrelation for allotment parcels according to regional interaction group returned an index value of 0.38. This suggests that parcels of one group are significantly more likely to be situated near parcels of that same group (table 2).

TABLE 2  
SPATIAL AUTOCORRELATION RESULTS

Parcels by	Moran's Index	<i>p</i>	Interpretation
Regional Interaction Group	0.38	<0.001	clustered
Ancestral Homeland Group	0.48	<0.001	clustered

The relative distribution of allotment parcels by regional interaction group also preserved the spatial proxemics observed in the Hazen Map (fig. 3). Groups with ties to southwestern Oregon tended to secure land in the southern and western areas of the reservation; those with ties to northwestern Oregon in the northern part; and those with ties to the Cascade Mountains and eastern Oregon along the reservation's eastern boundary. This distribution becomes clearer when regional interaction groups are combined based solely on the location of allottees' ancestral homelands in western Oregon (table 1, fig. 7). Parcels remain significantly spatially autocorrelated, returning a Moran's Index value of 0.48 (table 2), and divided along the course of the South Yamhill River.

Figure 7 also shows the average location of ancestral homeland groups' allotments and their corresponding Hazen Map encampment. The relative location of these spatial centers in 1855 changed little following allotment. Allotment decisions within reservation communities gravitated toward their respective encampment areas, suggesting that these locations had accrued cultural significance over the previous three decades.

Federal politicians celebrated the Dawes Act as a tool for undermining attachments within Native communities. In practice, tribes' guidance of the allotment selection process followed from and served to reinforce long-standing cultural ties. At Grand Ronde, relationships between historical neighbors influenced the location and cultural

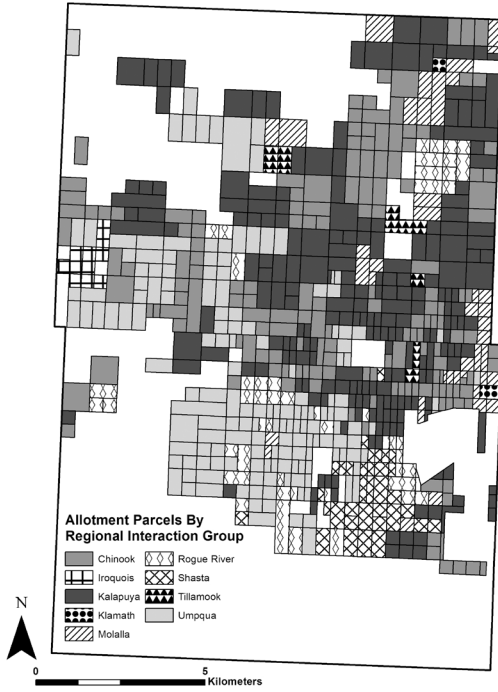


FIGURE 6. Grand Ronde allotment parcels by regional interaction group.

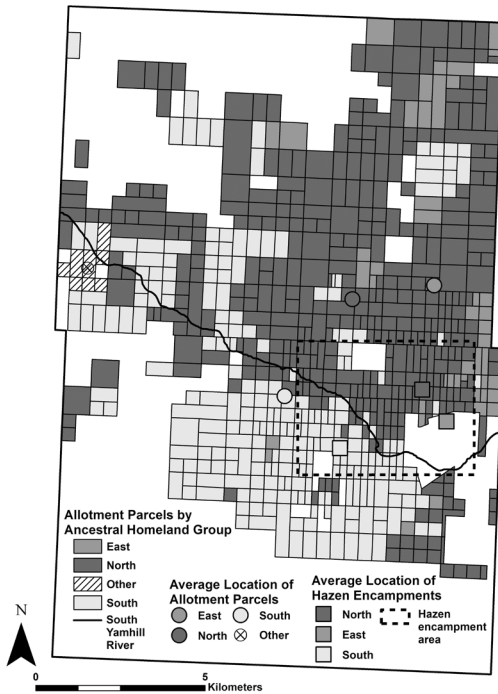


FIGURE 7. Grand Ronde allotment parcels by location of allottees' ancestral homeland in western Oregon and average locations of allotment parcels and Hazen Map encampments.

composition of reservation settlements immediately following removal. This culturally informed settlement system likely persisted over the next three decades, as reservation residents leveraged the relative freedom to settle land on their terms. When Agent Collins arrived in 1889, the division of the landscape into privately owned plots presented an opportunity to solidify this system of land tenure. Residents were not all able to secure land in the more densely populated, agricultural hub of the east central reservation. Yet land selection across the rest of the reservation, including in the forested uplands, drew on intercommunity relationships. The result was a reproduction of the pre-reservation western Oregon Native landscape within a Euro-American system of land tenure. Far from the start of an assimilationist campaign, allotment at Grand Ronde can be better described as a story of survivance in which tribal members creatively adapted tradition and social relationships to the exigencies of reservation life.<sup>51</sup>

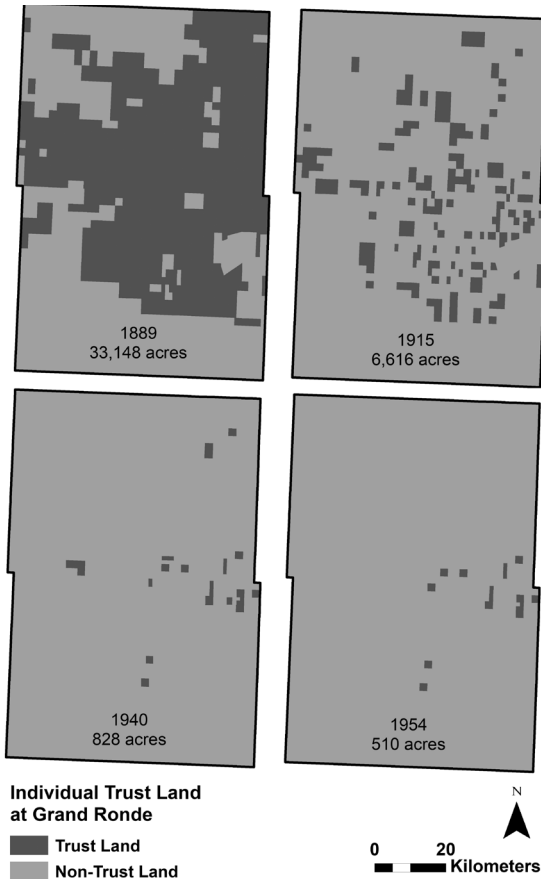
### *Tribal Land Tenure at Grand Ronde, 1889–1954*

Though the Grand Ronde community succeeded in bending allotment to tribal interests, they could not have foreseen the long-term impact the policy would have on Native land tenure. A combination of factors—opening of surplus lands, competency determinations, and forced fee patenting—conspired to transfer reservation land to non-Native parties. In 1901, Inspector McLaughlin arrived in Grand Ronde to negotiate the government’s purchase of the reservation’s surplus lands. McLaughlin noted that the land held great timber, agricultural, and grazing potential. Tribal members pushed for \$2 per acre but were ultimately negotiated down to \$1.10 per acre for roughly twenty-six thousand acres, or 40 percent of the reservation.<sup>52</sup> Subsequent decades saw dozens of Grand Ronde allotments sold either by reservation agents or allottees. The decline in individual trust land on the reservation through time is shown in figure 8. By 1954, only 510 acres, less than 1 percent of the original reservation, remained held in trust by tribal members.

In the 1950s, federal officials used the lack of individual trust lands at Grand Ronde to terminate the tribe. Termination built on the assimilationist legacies of allotment and boarding schools by severing the government-to-government relationship between the United States and tribal nations. Douglas McKay, a former Oregon governor, served as one of termination’s architects and sought to use the tribes of his home state as proof of the concept’s efficacy. During congressional hearings reviewing Grand Ronde’s suitability for termination, politicians inquired into the state of assimilation with the Euro-American population. The paucity of trust land and outward similarities between Grand Ronde homes and those of Euro-Americans were presented as evidence that the policy would have few negative impacts on the community.<sup>53</sup> The tribe was terminated in 1954.

The Dawes Act left an indelible mark at Grand Ronde. It facilitated the near-total transfer of reservation land to non-Native parties and encouraged federal officials to pursue, and ultimately implement, deeply damaging termination policy. Remembering these events, however, must also include a celebration of Grand Ronde resilience. From allotment’s inception, tribal members manipulated the policy to their own ends. And

even amid widespread dispossession, it did not result in the physical or cultural breakdown of the community. During the first half of the twentieth century, tribal members continued to live at Grand Ronde, often as lessees on their families' original allotments. They harvested first foods, spoke Chinuk Wawa, and maintained links between families at Grand Ronde and other reservations. They worked in the logging industry, picked hops and berries on local farms, and sold fish and baskets. They persisted, not without hardship or change, but as a community. This spirit remained despite termination, and in the 1980s it propelled community activists to Washington, DC to lobby for the tribe's restoration. Before the House Interior and Insular Affairs Committee, Vice Chair of the Grand Ronde Tribal Council Kathryn Harrison stated, "I bring you greetings from my People: descendants of a People who began our passage through Oregon's unwritten history 127 years ago. How fortunate we are that they persisted so we, who came after them, could be here."<sup>54</sup> The Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde Community of Oregon were restored in 1983. Five years later, 9,811 acres of the original reservation were returned to the tribe.



**FIGURE 8.** Individual trust land on the Grand Ronde Reservation. Sources: H.A. Bushman, "Trust Property, Grand Ronde-Siletz-Southern Oregon Indians," 11 January, 1954, Records Group 75, Series 6, Box 11, Folder 1, National Archives, Seattle, Washington; Edwin L. Chalcraft, "Report on Grand Ronde Allottees," 1915, Records Group 75, Series 6, Box 8, Folder 1, National Archives, Seattle, Washington; L.E. Garrison, "Grand Ronde Indian Reservation of Oregon," Records Group 75, Central Map File, Map #12172, National Archives, College Park, MD; William A. Jones, Letter to James McLaughlin, 19 June 1901, Letter Book 487, Land Division, Records Group 75, Photocopy in "Correspondence between the Department of the Interior & The Grand Ronde Indian Agency 1893-1901" folder, Grand Ronde Historic Preservation Office.

## LAND TENURE RESEARCH IN THE SERVICE OF TRIBAL HISTORIC PRESERVATION

The Grand Ronde Land Tenure Project has revealed new information about the competing spatial agendas that unfolded on the reservation during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The reservation landscape did not exclusively reflect the assimilationist aspirations of federal officials, nor was it a space in which Native communities lived free of government interference. Rather, it was an arena of cultural contestation within which Native lifeways engaged with federal policies and often undermined them.

These insights contribute to the work of the Grand Ronde Historic Preservation Office and related departments. Most immediately, land tenure information will aid cultural protection. Newly digitized maps will allow historic preservation staff to locate homes, activity areas, and properties of past tribal members as well as places of cultural and/or spiritual importance. Doing so will prove critical during consultations with tribal departments and developers to ensure cultural resources are protected ahead of economic development on tribal and nontribal lands.

Project data will also be paired with archaeological investigation to better understand past reservation lifeways. Field Methods in Indigenous Archaeology, a community-based training program codirected by the Historic Preservation Office and the University of Washington, provides one example. Since 2015, the program has offered a summer field school designed to implement Grand Ronde forms of archaeological practice.<sup>55</sup> Native and non-Native student participants become familiar with community-based research methods, visit places of cultural importance throughout the tribe's homelands, and reflect on the challenges and opportunities facing THPOs. They also learn to employ low-impact archaeological field strategies. The project employs aerial photography and geophysical and surface survey to build increasingly informed understandings of a site before (and at times in lieu of) excavation. Fieldwork has focused on a small parcel in the east central reservation. In the last 150 years, the property has been part of the Molalla Encampment noted by Hazen, the allotment of tribal member James Foster, and the land of Chemawa Indian School employee and former student William Teabo. Today, it serves as a camping ground for Grand Ronde powwows and cultural events. This chain of title encapsulates the complex cultural and spatial history of the Grand Ronde Reservation. Linking this history with recovered remains of houses, tools, and foods will lead to a more complete picture of life at Grand Ronde though time.

Lastly, the Grand Ronde Land Tenure Project has relevance to initiatives within the wider tribal community. For the Grand Ronde Natural Resources Department, situating settlement patterns within the context of reservation seasonal rounds may provide insight into resource harvesting post-removal. The tribe's Lands Department is interested in the location and sale of allotment parcels, as this information may help prioritize purchasing decisions. Reacquisition of original reservation land, and its conversion from fee to trust status, enhances Grand Ronde's ability to spearhead economic development, protect threatened cultural resources and habitats, and combat land checkerboarding, which complicates all phases of tribal governance.

## CONCLUSION

The Grand Ronde Land Tenure Project is not complete. Researchers will continue to analyze reservation spatial data in an effort to remember and celebrate the community's shifting relationship with land. Increasing consolidation of parcels by timber companies, changing patterns of land use, and the continued presence of dispossessed tribal members on the reservation are all topics for future research.

At this stage, however, the project makes a case for the scholarly value of tribal historic preservation. For centuries, decisions regarding the protection—and often destruction—of Native heritage were made by non-Native archaeologists, developers, and politicians. The legacy of these decisions is seen in the continued emphasis on object- and site-centered mitigation strategies within the historic preservation industry. Among academic archaeologists, a lack of knowledge about tribal historic preservation persists, even as the number of collaborative research projects continues to grow. Proponents of indigenous archaeologies argue that teaching and learning about the past must be bidirectional. Non-Native archaeologists have much to contribute to tribes' protection of cultural resources, but they have much to learn from tribes about the meaning of and proper interaction with these resources.<sup>56</sup>

Regardless of their occupational setting, archaeologists would do well to take notice of the heritage-protection work being done within tribal communities. Over the last three decades, tribes have lobbied for and won increased oversight over the treatment of archaeological sites, human remains, and cultural landscapes. Along the way, they have forwarded expansive forms of historical significance that center Native values, epistemologies, and ontologies both in caring for cultural resources on tribal lands and in consulting with federal agencies ahead of land-disturbing activities in their ancestral homelands. These self-determined archaeologies are critical expressions of sovereignty. They ensure tribes' heritage is protected for future generations and lay the groundwork for reconnecting communities with practices that have been suppressed or marginalized. The Grand Ronde Land Tenure Project, as one example of this work, complicates the narrative of dispossession that fueled termination at Grand Ronde. As the tribe celebrates thirty-five years since restoration, the maps, documents, and analysis contributed by the project ensure that accounts of Grand Ronde history will include more than tales of hardship but also tribal members' creativity, resilience, and persistence.

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