

NATIVE PEOPLES

DRUMS
HEARTBEAT OF A CULTURE

BLACKWARE
PUEBLO POTTERY

A CENTURY OF
**TRADE
BLANKETS**

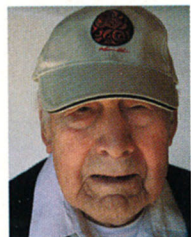
**MOHAWK MUSICIAN
DEREK MILLER**

JULY/AUGUST 2009
\$5.99 DISPLAY UNTIL AUGUST 31



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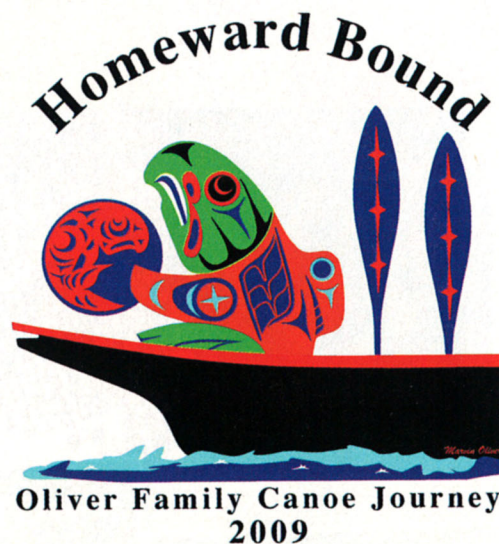
THE HONORING CANOE



Emmett Oliver

World-renowned Indian educator **Emmett Oliver**, an elder of the Quinault Indian Nation of Washington, was the force behind a great intertribal canoe journey held in the waters of Puget Sound in 1989 for the Seattle Centennial. His idea for a pan-Indian canoe excursion helped lead to a revival of the art of canoe carving among Pacific Northwest Indian tribes, and with that a number of vital spiritual and ceremonial practices.

Oliver grew up in poverty in the Willapa region. He dropped out of high school but later returned, and in the end earned two college degrees and went on to revolutionize Indian education in Washington. All this preceded his concept of a canoe-carving program that culminated in 17 tribal canoes traveling together in what came to be known as the first Paddle to Seattle. For that historic event, Oliver had to secure



canoes were a lost art in the Pacific Northwest. Those in existence were only found in museums."

Oliver is being recognized in this year's **Tribal Canoe Journey**, hosted by the **Suquamish Nation**, with construction of a special 35-foot cedar-strip canoe, the Honoring Canoe, and the event's theme: Homeward Bound. The craft is adorned with art designed by his son **Marvin Oliver**, an art professor at the University of Washington who sells his artwork nationally and internationally (see July/Aug. 2006 issue). Oliver's family will paddle the canoe in the excursion. When the 110 or so canoes come ashore Aug. 2 at Golden Gardens Beach

in Seattle (near Ballard Locks) and again at Suquamish on Aug. 3, the 95-year-old will greet the pullers. You can be sure he will also receive a rousing welcome, befitting the key role he has played in the cultural and spiritual revival of his people.

—Amber Cook

permission from the U.S. Forest Service to fell 600-year-old cedar trees, two for each tribe, needed for the canoes.

"We are very proud of him," his daughter Marilyn tells me. "He started the revival of canoe making, because by 1985 dugout

MUSIC NOTES

I overlooked it when first released in 2007, but *Faces in the Rocks* (Grass Roots Records) by **Mariee Sioux** (Paiute/Mexican Indigenous/non-Native) is an incredible work. A mesmerizing voice and arrangements; sparse but rich, wonderful poetic song-stories; her clean acoustic guitar work and minimalist use of buffalo drum; redwood flute by Grammy-nominated Gentle Thunder; mandolin by her father, Gary Sobonya; and accordion, bass, cello and other instruments create a soulful soundscape that sticks to you like glue. Details: www.myspace.com/marieesioux

Randy Granger (Chol/Athabaskan/Apache/Comanche/Dogrib/non-Native) has produced a fine work in his eight-track CD *A Place Called Peace*. Using a nice play of flutes (including rare re-created Anasazi instruments), hand drums, a "hang drum" and vocals, the work reflects his lifelong residency in the American Southwest, with songs such as "Rio Grande Lullaby" and "Chaco Moon Meditation." Details: www.randygranger.net

Another notable flute-driven work is *Warrior's Last Breath* (Ancient Oak Productions) by **Mike Serna** (Mescalero Apache/Gabrielino). Several of the 13 tracks feature the extraordinary fiddler



Emerald Ash Borer Threatens Basket Weaving

Some of the world's finest handmade baskets are produced by Native weavers in the woodlands of the northeastern United States and Canada. A favorite material for these works is thin strips of wood harvested from the ash tree, which has been used for thousands of years throughout the region.

However, healthy ash trees are becoming increasingly difficult to find—particularly the favored black ash—as a small bug originally confined to China, the emerald ash borer, eats its way through the region's forests.

"The introduction of alien species was devastating to the First Peoples of this continent," notes ash basket weaver **Frank Meuse** of the Bear River First Nation (L'sitkuk). "Today we are still struggling to teach our children about the relationship they need to have with the land. We can only hope our elders are speaking the truth when they say the trees will make themselves invisible until we learn to respect them."

As the insect invasion spreads, the regulations created to combat it seem

almost as difficult to deal with as the bug itself. The regulations were designed to restrict the movement of living beetles while not limiting the activities of people who earn a living from ash trees, including basket weavers, but the restrictive codes are severely hampering the weavers. For instance, wood from an infected area with its bark intact cannot be moved, while wood from unaffected areas can be moved—if proper certificates from specified authorities are obtained. But identifying which areas are okay to harvest in and which are not is problematical, as the bug continues its advance. To check on the status of an area, call 866/322-4512 in the United States, and 866/463-6017 in Canada.

Reversing the ash's disappearance is about restoration, but previously used greenhouse methods for seed propagation are not adequate for large-scale replanting, with only a small percentage of the seeds germinating and thriving. However, Laurie Yeates, a research greenhouse manager for the Canadian Forest Service in Fredericton, New



DAN KERR

Ash tree blossom.

Brunswick, has learned that drastically varying the temperatures the seedlings are exposed to results in much higher success rates. "I look at natural seedlings and think how they would be if [they were] outside," she explains.

But large-scale ash restoration projects are only possible if bumper crops of seeds are collected. Seed collectors are still needed in many areas. details: www.northnet.org/atfe/atfe.htm or contact Les Benedict of the Akwesasne Task Force on the Environment at lkbenedi@northnet.org.

—Pat Kerr

Arvel Bird (Paiute), along with Serna's rich flute and guitar accompaniment. It's a mostly instrumental work, with the exception of the playfully titled track "Zaa Zee Za Zu Zing."

A very powerful freshman effort from **Apryl Allen** in *Shape Shifter* (ADA Music, Inc.) pays tribute to her Comanche ancestors, including some spoken Comanche lines by one of the few speakers left of the language, **Videll Yackeschi**. Somewhat clichéd but heartfelt lyrics mix with piano, electric guitars, flutes, and other modern and traditional instruments.

Riding the country trail is RCA recording artist **Crystal Shawanda** (of

the Wikwemikong Indian Reserve of Ontario), as heard on her CD, *Dawn of a New Day*. Her smoky-edged voice propels the galloping beats, filled in by lush strings and other flourishes that produce a very slick and professional sound. Her debut single, "You Can Let Go," reached the country charts—a remarkable achievement for this young artist.

A trio of good blues CDs has crossed the desk: *Goin' for It* by **Terry Tsotigh** (Kiowa) of Oklahoma; *Let's Take a Ride* by the **Slidin' Clyde Roulette Band**, led by Clyde Roulette (Ojibwe) of Manitoba, Canada; and *Lovesick Blues* by **Gary Farmer** (Mohawk). *Goin' for It* includes lots of har-

monica by Tsotigh, who also doubles as the drummer, accompanied by some excellent sax, guitars and bass. Details by e-mail at terry_straightdancer@yahoo.com. *Let's Take a Ride's* 14 tunes, most written by Roulette, including the standout "Red Man," have echoes of Muddy Waters and Chet Atkins. Details: www.clyderoulette.com. *Lovesick Blues* is a compilation of versions of blues standards by the likes of Willy Dixon, John Lee Hooker and Little Walter (with two tunes by Farmer). The sound is led by Farmer's smokin' harmonica wailings and rough vocals. He's best known as an actor (*Dead Man*, *Pow Wow Highway*, etc.) but plays a mean harp.

