

HIGH DESERT MUSEUM

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Bend, OR — The High Desert Museum is redesigning our annual *Frontier Days* program to be more inclusive of Oregon's diverse cultural heritage, thanks to grant support from the Oregon Heritage Commission and the Deschutes Cultural Coalition. *Frontier Days*, offered for five days each April, presents fourth-grade students with an opportunity to explore the history of westward expansion and frontier living in late 19th and early 20th century Oregon.

The program features student-directed learning and problem solving through hands-on activities, including tasks such as collaboratively packing a covered wagon, building a cabin with life-sized Lincoln logs, creating pioneer tools, investigating animal pelts and skulls and interacting with living history characters at a fur traders' camp and our 1904 Miller Family Ranch.

While students have successfully learned about the time period through participation in *Frontier Days* since its inception, by reimagining the program over the next two years, we will be able to deepen their appreciation and understanding of diverse cultural perspectives and experiences. Through the integration of several additional stories into the program, including the complex relationship between new settlers and indigenous groups, the impact of westward migration on American Indian tribes in the region, the exclusionary practices Chinese immigrants faced in the West and how the experience of African Americans traveling west differed from other settlers, students will gain a better understanding of how these diverse experiences are interwoven in Oregon's history.

The changes to the program will also help support implementation of Oregon's ethnic studies curriculum requirements set forth in House Bill 2845, passed in July, 2017.

Set for April 16-20, this year's *Frontier Days* program will include a station featuring Gwen Carr from Oregon Black Pioneers, a leading resource for African American contributions to Oregon's history. Carr will offer students a chance to learn about the experience black youth and their families had while traveling the Oregon Trail, not only those who made the trip as enslaved people, but also those who migrated willingly.

"We are happy to be partnering with the High Desert Museum to tell the story of the black pioneers who were an essential part of Oregon's early development," Carr said. "This is an opportunity for students to not only learn that there were black people on the Oregon Trail, but to hear what their journey was like. Students will also hear stories of black people who were already living in Central Oregon at the time and how westward migration impacted their lives."

Along with Oregon Black Pioneers, the Museum will be consulting with various individuals, groups and organizations while redesigning *Frontier Days*.

"The Museum is committed to highlighting diverse voices in our exhibitions and programs and this project is particularly exciting for us," said HDM Executive Director Dana Whitelaw, Ph.D. "The funding from the Oregon Heritage Commission and the Deschutes Cultural Coalition will help us incorporate a more diverse experience for the students in our community."

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ABOUT THE MUSEUM:

THE HIGH DESERT MUSEUM opened in 1982 and brings regional wildlife, culture, art and natural resources together to promote an understanding of the natural and cultural heritage of North America's high desert country. The Museum uses indoor and outdoor exhibits, wildlife in natural habitats, and living history demonstrations to help people discover and appreciate the high desert environment. The Museum is a 501(c) 3 nonprofit organization accredited by the American Alliance of Museums and is a Smithsonian Affiliate.

<https://www.highdesertmuseum.org>

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