

# 'Listening circle' begins to take shape

By ELAINE WILLIAMS of the Tribune | Posted: Saturday, February 7, 2015 12:00 am

Rectangular pieces of basalt are arranged on pallets and look a bit like grave markers at Chief Timothy Park west of Clarkston.

The numbered stones and nearby mounds of dirt are tangible signs that a "listening circle" designed by internationally famed artist Maya Lin and conceived more than a decade ago will soon be under construction.

No firm timeline has been established for completion, but the goal is to have the project finished before a May 29 dedication ceremony. Lin will attend the dedication ceremony, said Confluence Project Executive Director Colin Fogarty of Vancouver, Wash., which is coordinating the installation.

"There is no doubt this has taken longer than people anticipated, but we've always had our eyes on the prize and it's finally going to happen," he said.

Fogarty leads the not-for-profit group backing the \$1.5 million Washington state-funded project at Chief Timothy and five other related installations in Washington and Oregon. They are designed to explore human interaction with the Snake and Columbia rivers.

"It's an effort to connect people with the ongoing history, culture and ecology throughout the Columbia River System," Fogarty said.

The "listening circle," or amphitheater, in Asotin County will be built at a depression already in the hillside and have rock seats where people can sit. More native grasses are being added at the site, and a new osprey nest is being constructed because ospreys nest along the trail that leads to the amphitheater, Fogarty said.

Lin will visit during construction, but not be involved in the day-to-day work.

"It's a very specific design," Fogarty said. "The people on the ground doing the work will follow the design to a 'T.' ... It's different than a sculpture."

Once the installation is completed, generally those coming to see it will be treated the same as other park guests, said park Manager Jerry Pinkerton with Northwest Land Management. The private company has an operations contract with the property's owner, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

An exception might be made for the day of the dedication ceremony, when a park day-use fee might be waived, Pinkerton said.

The park has no vehicle access in the winter. Day-use visitors pay a per-car fee, which was \$5 last year and covers amenities such as bathrooms and parking lots.

A half-mile trail leads to the listening circle site from a parking lot that isn't used much now. A handful of



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Chief Timothy Park Site Manager Jerry Pinkerton looks over the Maya Lin staging area where stones have been placed that will encircle the natural amphitheater that will create a "listening circle" at the park. The project is starting construction after more than a decade.

handicapped-accessible spots will be available much closer to the amphitheater for people with disabilities.

If the concept unfolds as Fogarty hopes it will, the dedication ceremony won't be the only time crowds of people see the work.

"We want this not only to be a destination for folks, but really a community resource as well," he said. "We see this as a place for community events, whatever the community wants it to be. You could hold rock concerts there."

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