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Descendant of Lewis and Clark Explorer Continues Campaign

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS JULY 25, 2015, 6:04 P.M. E.D.T.

LEWISTON, Idaho — A former national inline speed skating champion is staying the course on his quest to raise awareness of an ancestor connected to Lewis and Clark's 1802 expedition.

Cory Skyler Drouillard has been campaigning since November in hopes of increasing recognition of his family's historical importance, the Lewiston Tribune reported.

The 25-year-old Drouillard is a descendant of George Drouillard, who helped guide, interpret, hunt and scout along the expedition.

"He was the highest-paid member (of the Corps of Discovery) because he was so important, like a VIP," Drouillard said, saying that George Drouillard was the official guide and interpreter for the expedition, not Sacajawea. "Let's not over-exaggerate and start giving the title of guide and interpreter to the person who was not the guide and interpreter."

Drouillard originally was supposed to skate the length of the Corp's 1802 route —roughly 2,500 miles from Jefferson City, Missouri, to Seaside, Oregon — but he canceled the plan because he received a lack of media attention after making two stops in Missouri.

"There's an industry that has grown up around Sacajawea," said Chris Harris, a publicist hired by Drouillard to help his cause. "They would have to change books. They would have to get rid of postcards, tours, documentaries. A lot of things would have to be changed."

Lewis and Clark historian James P. Ronda disputes the argument that George Drouillard was snubbed by history, arguing that he is mentioned prominently in journals and correspondence.

Ronda added that historians agree that there was no official guide or interpreter on the Lewis and Clark expedition.

"What people choose to write at a later time always reflects their own interests and aspirations," Ronda said. "Doing history is always a process of inclusion and exclusion. You can't write about everybody."

George Drouillard has a museum named in his honor in Bellefontaine, Ohio, as well as Mt. Drouillard in Teton County, Montana.

The young descendant, however, is now threatening to take legal action to include his fourth-great uncle in documentaries and textbooks involving the 1804 expedition.

"We're now going up against a situation where there is an industry built around Lewis and Clark and Sacajawea," he said. "And the only way to rain on that parade is to call those people out, whoever they may be, that are making up this false accounting."

This story corrects to say in the third paragraph that Cory Skyler Drouillard is a descendant of George Drouillard.
