Judge: 'I thought I was in trouble with the Oregon State Bar'

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ceremony in October, Wade described Johnson in glowing terms.

"Twenty-five years ago, Judge Johnson began a campaign to have tribal court judgments be recognized in Oregon courts," Wade said. "Judge Johnson had built the Confederated Tribes court into a professional organization worthy of all the other courts in Oregon. He faced immense resistance, mostly borne of ignorance about how tribal courts operate. It took him 25 years, but in 2021, the Oregon Legislature passed the statute giving full faith and credit to tribal court judgments in Oregon courts. Now tribal court defendants cannot avoid support

awards or domestic violence restraining orders simply because they do not reside on the reservation. It is a tremendous achievement."

Johnson keeps the shiny plaque he received in his office at the Nixyaawii Governance Center, perhaps as a reminder to never stop dreaming.

Johnson, the first member of the CTUIR to graduate law school and pass the Oregon State bar exam, came to the law serendipitously after he read a Newsweek article in the early 1970s that reported there were only two Indian lawyers in the country at the time. Johnson liked the idea of increasing those numbers. The Pendleton High School graduate did his undergrad work at

Oregon State University and then studied law at the University of Oregon.

After a stint as a prosecutor for Lane County, he headed back home to practice. Still in his 20s, he simultaneously served as both chairman of the CTUIR Board of Trustees and chairman of the CTUIR General Council — the only tribal member ever to **Johnson** do that. In 1980, he began serving as associate judge in the Umatilla Tribal Court and then acting chief judge. His first term as chief judge began in 1988.

In 2011, at Johnson's urging, the CTUIR Board of Trustees voted to create an independent judiciary with separation of powers. This was a necessary move, he

said, that ensured the court was autonomous from tribal government.

Behind the bench, Johnson has a reputation for being imposing yet cour-

teous and respectful, and for injecting humor. He said he considers tribal customs and traditions while meting out justice and he is mindful that his native language has no word for judge, the closest being a word that means decider.

In his tribal courtroom, Johnson presides over criminal cases, juvenile cases, traffic infractions, contract disputes and whatever else lands before him. Behind his bench hang three flags: CTUIR, Oregon and the United States. While tribal

on and inclusion of family members at Cross the

Divide activities. Everyone involved recognizes that

war trauma affects more

than the veteran, trauma-

tizing the veteran's loved

tion we need to go in this

up to families," Marcum said. "We're going to be

and that's why it's opening

walking with the Lord and

what God has created for us

Moured said that in

his decades as a chaplain,

leading marriage retreats.

He's well aware that one of

the worst postwar casualties

of going to war is the strain

"As a faith-based ser-

belief that we can get back

intended," he said. "He cre-

ated us, and by aligning our

lives to biblical principles

and finding hope through

Christ, we can experience growth, increase our resil-

iency and lead our fami-

effectively."

lies and communities more

vice to veterans, it's our

to living the way God

he has much experience

teaching them about the

Lord and showing them

"I think that's the direc-

ones, too.

to enjoy."

on marriages.

courts and non-tribal courts aren't mirror images of each other, he said, many of the codes are similar to federal laws.

Johnson has long advocated the federal Violence Against Women Act, which covers some of the same ground as the new Oregon law. The CTUIR was selected for a pilot program to prosecute non-Indians for domestic violence against Indians on the reservation. When VAWA was reauthorized in 2013, it included new provisions addressing violence against Native women by restoring tribal jurisdiction over non-Native perpetrators of domestic violence that occurred on tribal land. In 2014, the CTUIR was one of only three tribes initially allowed to participate in the program.

Domestic violence is the only crime for which non-Indians currently can be prosecuted. Clamping down on domestic violence remains one of Johnson's passions. Native American women are 10 times more likely to be murdered than other Americans. The U.S. Department of Justice reports tribal women are more likely to experience rape and domestic violence, often at the hands of a non-Indian perpetrator.

This new Oregon law offers positive change.

"This is a long time coming," Johnson said, "and benefits tribal nation judicial systems as well as all who use those systems by promoting certainty and uniformity."

DIVIDE

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returning home and for the next two years, the Navy enabled me to lead five-day retreats in the woods for caregivers and first responders."

Although Divide Camp's name will change, much of the focus will remain the same. The new organization will inherit the headquarters building in downtown Joseph. The land remains under Wheeler's ownership and will be available for use by veterans groups, including Cross the Divide.

"(The headquarters) is presently being operated as an Airbnb," Wheeler said. "The main reason is to try to finish paying it off. In the future, it will provide lodging for vets who are coming to hunt and fish."

But the change is more than just the name. It reflects an increased emphasis on the cross of Jesus, according to Moured.

"The cross reminds of Jesus — our Creator, our Savior, the Author and Finisher of our faith and the only One who can provide true power for real inner change," Moured wrote in a newsletter announcing the change. "Julie's deepest conviction has been that Divide Camp focus more ongoing future growth. My goals and desire are absolutely aligned with hers.

"Cross the Divide reminds us of the incredibly rich history of Divide Camp in the Wallowa Mountains, where Julie and her family laid the foundation for this outreach to veterans. We want to remember that our future successes are built on the vision and hard work of those who laid that foundation."

There's a direct tie between the new and the old, Moured said.

"The imagery of crossing a divide helps us intentionally communicate what we do in the process of helping veterans — that is, we ask them to think about where they are and

BIRTHDAY

affairs.

mail.

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always wanted to talk about world events instead," said Ballard, who said her aunt closely follows international

McMurphy grew up in the Starkey area and was the daughter of a letter carrier for the U.S. Postal Ser-

vice, said Dana Wright,

her grandson-in-law. She remembers riding in a

father as he delivered the

horse-drawn buggy with her

McMurphy later was a

hairdresser for 47 years in Union County, working at

the Union Hotel, a Union

Church and the Sacajawea

"I charged the lowest

rates in the county. Some

hairdressers didn't like me

McMurphy has been a

because of that," she said.

prolific letter writer much

Hotel in La Grande,

according to Wright.



Emile "Mo" Moured/Contributed Photo

Navy Chaplain Emile "Mo" Moured, left, stands with U.S. Marine First Sgt. Rogelio Haro during a 2010 counterterrorism deployment to Southeast Asia with the 2nd Battalion, 7th Marine Regiment. Moured will take over as executive director of Cross the Divide, formerly known as Divide Camp, on Friday, Dec. 31, 2021.

where they want to be, and then offer to walk through that journey with them across some challenging personal terrain in order to begin achieving that transformation," he wrote. "The mission of Cross the Divide will be to help veterans and their families through programming in outdoor venues."

New to the group

In addition to Moured, new members are expected to join the group's board. Among them are Kris Crowley, the pastor of Tenderfoot Christian Fellowship, Joseph.

Veterans are in need of spiritual care and guidance to set them up for eternity," he said. "The new executive director approached me because he wants to see spiritual guidance for veterans."

Crowley, too, is eager to see what the new group will do.

"I think that Cross the Divide is heading in a neat direction," he said. "We'll take some things that Julie did and keep them going in that direction."

New board members are retired Navy SEAL Jack James and his wife, Stacey. Jack James will be the secretary and Stacey James, who also is retired military, will be the treasurer. The couple, who live in Wallowa, were unavailable

for comment.

Moured said other members are from several military veterans of all branches of the Armed Forces, including other retired SEALs and a retired admiral with the Navy Chaplain Corps.

"Most important, all of our prospective board members are committed to the ministry and mission of supporting our veterans and their families through the power of outdoor venues," he said.

Andy Marcum, who served as Divide Camp's vice president for hunting, will step back to his familiar role of hunting guide instead of spending time in meetings.

"I'm just going to step back to doing what I do anyway," he said.

He said he welcomes the widening of the group's services to other veterans, as well as to their families.

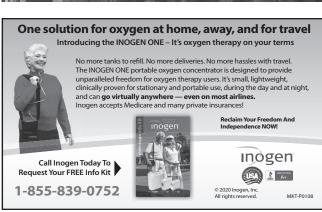
"We realized the need to expand from that group of people," Marcum said, adding that such expansion already had started.

He said the familiar hunts for elk and deer will be added to with bear and turkey hunts and fishing. The first six turkey hunts on three weekends begin April 15, 2022.

Emphasis on families

One thing that's new will be a greater emphasis







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Dick Mason/The Observer

 $Mildred\,McMurphy, left, speaks\,with\,Lodema\,Asper\,as\,they\,celebrate$ their 105th and 104th birthday, respectively, on Tuesday, Dec. 28, 2021, at Wildflower Lodge in La Grande.

of her life. She continues to pen three to five letters a day, many of which are messages of encouragement. She did not write any letters

on her birthday, though. "I took the day off," she

McMurphy was an active walker for many years and so was Asper, according

to their families. Today, McMurphy uses a walker but still gets around Wildflower Lodge on her own.

McMurphy said she has never dwelled upon reaching the 105-year-old mark.

"I never gave it a thought," she said. "I just live each day as it comes."