

VHS Runners Shine at Cross Country State Championship



See full story on page 12.

Jamboree Scheduled to Return This Year

Plans are currently underway to revive the Vernonia Friendship Jamboree on the first full weekend of August.

At their April 5 meeting, the Vernonia City Council approved a request from the Jamboree Committee for use of numerous city properties on August 6-8. Jamboree President Roger Smith told the Council it is still unclear exactly which events will take place, but the group did request use of the Anderson Park Horse Arena, Hawkins Park where the logging show is held, along with Spencer Park where vendors and the car and motorcycle shows have been held in past years.

The Jamboree Committee is scheduled to meet virtually on Monday, April 26 at 7:00 pm.

U.S. Bank to Permanently Close Vernonia Branch

After shutting the doors to their Vernonia office for much of the COVID pandemic, U.S. Bank has announced they are permanently closing the branch, located at 905 Bridge Street.

In a letter sent to current customers, signed by District Leader Cassandra Voelker, U.S. Bank explains that, "...customer's banking preferences and behaviors are changing," so they are, "...adapting how and where we operate."

There is no mention in the letter about whether U.S. Bank will continue to operate the ATM machine located at the branch. Customers with safe deposit boxes received a separate letter instructing them to collect their property before June 22. For customer "convenience" the letter does include a map with other nearby branches in the region that are still open, including Banks, Scappoose, Clatskanie, and St. Helens.

Vernonia School Board Candidates

Six of the seven seats on the Vernonia School Board are up for election on May 18. Normally either three or four of the seven positions come up for election every two years, but during the last four years, three Board members resigned and one position went unfilled when no candidate ran for the seat, forcing the School Board to make appointments to those positions until the next election.

Three candidates are running unopposed. Three of the seats will have a contested election, although Leslie Seeberger, who is running for seat #3, thought no one was running for the seat when she applied and is encouraging everyone to vote for her opponent, Amy Cieloha, who currently holds the position.

Columbia County elections will not distribute a Voters Pamphlet for this election, so *Vernonia's Voice* asked each of the candidates to provide the following information to help voters familiarize themselves with the candidates:

- Past pertinent experience, boards or committees you have served on, community groups you've been involved in, or any other professional, personal, or volunteer experience that might be relevant.
- Please tell us why you are running for the School Board and what you hope to accomplish if elected.

Each candidate's total response was limited to 250 words and are published as provided without edits.

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The 'Slow-Motion Genocide' of the Chinook Indian Nation

Federal recognition provides tribes with critical healthcare and education. What happens to the tribal nations that the U.S. refuses to recognize?

By Anna V. Smith
High Country News
Artwork by Greg A. Robinson

Before the pandemic, the cedar plankhouse called Cathlapotle would have been full of stories and fire. Every winter, the Chinook Indian Nation and neighboring tribes hold their annual gathering here, on their ancestral lands

on a Columbia River floodplain, where red-winged blackbirds sing from the cat-tails and yellow-and-orange-eyed sandhill cranes strut on stilted legs. It's not far from the remnants of a village also called Cathlapotle, a major Chinookan trading town established around 1450 that once held as many as 16 plankhouses.

On sunny days when Cathlapotle is in use, the cedar beams glow warmly in the shafts of light streaming through the roof's smoke holes. People gather round the fires at the center, with a row of chairs for elders and children. The air echoes with talk and songs, and the smell of sweetgrass filters in from outside. But this winter, Cathlapotle was silent, nestled in untrodden green grass and fog, its doors closed.

Like other communities, Chinook tribal members have had to adapt to pandemic-induced isolation. Though scattered throughout the Pacific Northwest, people have recently gathered most Thursdays on Zoom, joined by members of the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde and others.

One Thursday afternoon in early March, a group of Chinuk Wawa language teachers, basket-weavers and storytellers called in from their homes on the Grand Ronde Reservation, in Portland, Eugene and Willapa Bay, to share *ikanum*, or traditional stories. In consonant-heavy Chinuk Wawa, they caught up with each other and read aloud an *ikanum* translated from the Kathlamet dialect of Chinook. It recalled a time of hunger on the edge of spring, when the salmon people went up the Columbia and



Family by Greg A. Robinson

met with their aunties, the big and little wapato, and their uncles, the skunk cabbage and the rushroot.

The stories are important for cultural continuity and the way they bring people together. "It really defines the whole way we look at the world," Tony Johnson, chairman of the Chinook Indian Nation, told me outside tribal headquarters in the tiny town of Bay Center, in southwestern Washington.

"Every landform here, every creek, every inlet has a connection to these stories. So if you know these stories, you see this place in a very different way."

For over 120 years, the Chinook Indian Nation has been trying to prove its sovereignty to the United States government by seeking formal federal recognition. Official status acknowledges the tribe's sovereignty and

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