

TRIBAL PROGRAM NEWS

Walt's Words of Wit and Wisdom

Well, it's been kind of an eventful week or so. Went hunting in Ukiah. I wanted to hunt in snow, though. Well, it snowed on Sunday maybe two inches. That was the day I was scheduled to go to the Snake River prison for a sweat. Some tribal members attended the sweat, but I don't remember their names, and also some from Grand Ronde. It was a good sweat, cold enough that the heat felt good. Good thing, too, because there must have been 100 rocks or more. I saw several that were at OSCI for some time.

Then on Thursday, I was to go to Two Rivers in Umatilla. On Wednesday night, it snowed eight inches, so I didn't get to hunt in that snow either. As a party, we have gotten many elk in that area. Every time, though, it was snow, sometimes pretty deep.

I saw several individuals from Siletz at Two Rivers. They said to tell their families that they are doing well. The ones that I remember there were Aaron Bennett, Erin Case, Archie Nelson, and someone else, too. Some were incapacitated and could not be there.

There is no sweat lodge in Two Rivers. They are in the process of getting one together, but can't organize into a club. It will be hard to get enough together to get a lodge built. The fire pit was built by a contractor who has no idea what a lodge is all about. He built a beautiful fountain. I asked the chaplain if she thought that one could get the rocks with all the concrete around the outside. I believe that this would be a true firewalker or maybe a fry pan walker. I do know that I won't make a commitment to make very many visits out there. I'd like to see more volunteers become involved in ceremonies in the institutions.

Not a burning issue, excuse the pun, but the Christmas holiday is quickly coming up with all of the happy things going on, like putting up the Christmas tree. Now that is one of the things we are going to talk about.

That tree, if it's a commercial tree, may be five weeks old and has started drying out. That's where the potential problem is. That tree is like dynamite just waiting for something. One thing is to put the tree in water fast so maybe it will draw some moisture into the needles. Another safety feature is to put the tree in such a place that, if it catches fire, the tree will not be between anyone and the way out. In other words, have an escape plan.

When putting lights on the tree, follow the manufacturer's recommendations exactly. Even this sometimes doesn't work. I've seen mobile homes burn where everything was done the way it should have been, but still something went wrong. The point is to not put any lights with any heat in them and to keep any flames from the tree. They do burn fast and explosive; one has no time when a tree catches fire.

Alcohol and the holidays don't go too well together either. With the consumption of holiday cheer goes good judgement. Sometimes with the fire safety, all is soon forgotten and maybe someone carelessly flings a cigarette or throws a match that is not completely out. Fire can raise all kinds of havoc with the happy holidays. Don't let it happen; as Smokey the Bear says, "Only you can prevent fire."

Also with alcohol, another strange thing happens. Seems that when we start drinking alcohol or using mind-altering chemicals, the family car comes into play. Now alcohol and a set of keys have a natural relationship, I think, because we'll decide to go out and drink at some club, bar, or tavern, then decide to drive home or to another bar or wherever.

We think that we are in pretty good shape, but an officer may see it differently and pull us over. Then we have to count our fingers, or maybe walk the line or touch our noses and heaven only knows what else. We fail and it's a trip to jail, where we may spend the whole darn holiday. Some holiday spirit. Or we may have an accident that leaves the family car inoperable. Explaining to our spouse what happened can be difficult because sometimes we don't know what happened. Or we may cause a serious accident in which someone is injured or killed. Our lives are changed forever from that moment on.

My good people, it is not worth it. I would be the last one to say, "Don't drink." But I will say if you are going to drink, have a plan to get from point A to point B, whether it's a taxi, bus, or maybe a designated driver. Please don't drink and drive.

Keep your home safe from fire, have a plan to get the family out of the home. If anything is a little suspicious, call your local fire department. I know this for sure, the fire department would a whole lot rather respond to something suspicious than to a fire. So please take care. I'm the engineer of the Siletz Rural Fire Department Engine 5301.

