

# Native American students face education challenges

NATALIE PATE  
Statesman Journal

SALEM — Debbie Austin grew up in the Great Depression, a “time when it was not a good thing to be an Indian.”

Talked down to by teachers, professors and medical professionals, berated by passersby, Austin thought, “If we were white, things would have been a lot easier for us.”

But she doesn’t want her more than 40 grandchildren and great-grandchildren to grow up the same way.

“I (don’t) want my children to feel bad about themselves,” Austin said.

Austin and her husband, Warner Austin, are elders in and founders of the Native American Cross Cultural Association, based in Salem, which celebrates various indigenous cultures across North America.

They advocate for more Native American studies and experiences to be shared in the classroom and encourage Native students to pursue their education.

But they are working against myriad obstacles.

Native American students in Oregon are graduating at lower rates, performing worse on state assessments, attending fewer days and receiving more suspensions and expulsions than their peers, according to a report released last week by the Oregon Department of Education.

For graduation rates alone, Oregon’s Native American students are graduating at about 56 percent, compared to the state’s overall four-year graduation rate of 74.8 percent.

“It’s clear from the data



Molly J. Smith/Statesman-Journal via AP

In this June 24 photo, Jessi Soliz dances as members of the Native American Cross Cultural Association perform at the 20th annual World Beat Festival at Riverfront Park in Salem.

that there are significant opportunity gaps for American Indian and Alaska Native students,” said Colt Gill, acting deputy superintendent for the state.

“The data allow us to see the problem, but it is up to us to partner with our tribes, communities and districts to ... better support our American Indian and Alaska Native students in culturally responsive ways.”

Experts believe a few key issues causing these negative outcomes include the lack of culturally relative curriculum, a lack of Native American teachers and staff in schools, a gap in services available to the families along with additional obstacles many Native American students face outside of the classroom.

A doctor in Pennsylvania told Debbie Austin in the late 1970s when she was a young mother, “Don’t ever bring your child here again — You people carry syphilis and tuberculosis.”

Shortly after, a college professor in Oregon told her the same thing. So did her

textbooks.

“Our children need to know that is not true,” Austin said. “They need to know who they are and where they came from.”

Austin argues there needs to be more curriculum about the Native American experience and more teachers and staff who identify as Native American in schools.

Shelby Maerz, who works for the Indian Education Department for Salem-Keizer Public Schools, agreed, saying students “need to be able to see themselves throughout the system.”

And according to state workers, student outcomes improve when an effort is made to be more inclusive.

The Tribal Attendance Pilot Project, for example, has been working to lessen the rate of chronically absent Native students.

By partnering school districts with the nine federally recognized tribes in the state, the program creates culturally specific plans and materials designed to the needs of each community.

**“It’s a good indicator that implementing culturally relevant programs provides benefits to all students, not just those from specific student groups.”**

— April Campbell, Indian education advisor for Oregon

Though the chronic absenteeism rate for Native students is higher than that of their peers, according to the report, the rate held steady at 30 percent in the last year recorded. The rate of chronically absent non-native students increased from 17 to 19 percent.

“Despite an unusually harsh winter, the majority of the schools with Tribal Attendance Pilot Project family advocates had improvements in their chronic absenteeism rates,” said April Campbell, the Indian education advisor for the state.

“It’s a good indicator that implementing culturally relevant programs provides benefits to all students, not just those from specific student groups,” she said.

There has also been action at the state level to improve representation in course materials.

Senate Bill 13, passed earlier this year, requires the Oregon Department of Education to develop curriculum exploring the Native American experience and provide professional development to teachers and administrators relating to the curriculum.

## DEATH NOTICES

**Wesley Berdar**  
Hermiston

July 27, 1935 - Nov. 18, 2017

Wesley Berdar, 82, of Hermiston died Saturday, Nov. 18, 2017, in Hermiston. He was born July 27, 1935, in Roundup, Mont. A memorial service will be held Saturday, Dec. 16 at 10 a.m. in the Burns Mortuary chapel in Hermiston. Burns Mortuary of Hermiston is in charge of arrangements. Leave an online condolence for the family at [www.burnsmortuaryhermiston.com](http://www.burnsmortuaryhermiston.com).

**Michael Jon ‘Mike’ Franklin**  
Beaverton

April 19, 1949 - Nov. 27, 2017

Former Milton-Freewater resident Michael Jon “Mike” Franklin, 68, of Beaverton died Monday, Nov. 27, 2017, in Weston. He was born April 19, 1949. Munselle-Rhodes Funeral Home in Milton-Freewater is in charge of arrangements.

**Jack Marshall**  
Hermiston  
Nov. 20, 2017

Jack Marshall, 55, of Hermiston died Monday, Nov. 20, 2017, at his home. A celebration of life with military honors will be held Monday, Dec. 4 at 11 a.m. at the Baker City Christian Church. Arrangements are under the direction of Tami’s Pine Valley Funeral Home & Cremation Services. Online condolences may be shared at [www.tamispinevalleyfuneralhome.com](http://www.tamispinevalleyfuneralhome.com)

**Alfonzo Alva Reyes**  
Milton-Freewater  
Nov. 16, 2017

Alfonzo Alva Reyes, 58, of Milton-Freewater died Thursday, Nov. 16, 2017, in Pendleton. Visitation will be held Saturday, Dec. 2 from 3 to 8 p.m. at Pendleton Pioneer Chapel, Folsom-Bishop. Online condolences may be shared with the family at [www.pioneerchapel.com](http://www.pioneerchapel.com)

**Jenneene Faye Runyon**  
Pendleton  
Sept. 29, 1957 - Nov. 26, 2017

Jenneene Faye Runyon, 60, of Pendleton died Sunday, Nov. 26, 2017. She was born Sept. 29, 1957, in Oklahoma. Burns Mortuary of Pendleton is in charge of arrangements. Sign the online condolence book at [www.burnsmortuary.com](http://www.burnsmortuary.com).

**Harriet McKim-Cable-Thompson**  
Pendleton  
Nov. 22, 2017

Harriet McKim-Cable-Thompson, 54, of Pendleton died Wednesday, Nov. 22, 2017, in Portland. A graveside service will be held in the spring of 2018 at Pine Haven Cemetery in Halfway (date and time to be announced). Arrangements are under the direction of Tami’s Pine Valley Funeral Home & Cremation Services. Online condolences may be shared at [www.tamispinevalleyfuneralhome.com](http://www.tamispinevalleyfuneralhome.com)

## UPCOMING SERVICES

### THURSDAY, NOV. 30

**KOWALESKI, CASEY** — Memorial service at 10 a.m. at Burns Mortuary, 336 S.W. Dorion Ave., Pendleton.  
**MOSES, LILLIAN** — Recitation of the rosary at 7 p.m. at St. Andrew’s Catholic Church, 48022 St. Andrews Road, Mission.  
**WINTERS, COLIN** — Funeral mass at 10:30 a.m. at St. Henry Catholic Church, 346 N.W. First St., Gresham, followed by a concluding committal service with military honors at Willamette National Cemetery, Portland.

### FRIDAY, DEC. 1

**MOSES, LILLIAN** — Mass of Christian Burial at 10 a.m. at St. Andrew’s Catholic Church, 48022 St. Andrew’s Road, Mission. Burial services and a reception will follow.  
**SUMNER, JOAN** — Recitation of the rosary at 10 a.m., with Mass of Christian Burial to follow at 11 a.m., at St. Patrick’s Catholic Church, 525 N. Gale St., Heppner. A celebration of life will follow at the Heppner Elks Lodge, 142 N. Main St.  
**WHITMAN, PAT** — Celebration of life at 2 p.m. at the Pendleton Eagles Lodge, 428 S. Main St.

## OBITUARY POLICY

The East Oregonian publishes paid obituaries. The obituary can include small photos and, for veterans, a flag symbol at no charge. Obituaries may be edited for spelling, proper punctuation and style. Expanded death notices will be published at no charge. These include information about services. Obituaries and notices can be submitted online at [www.eastoregonian.com/obituaryform](http://www.eastoregonian.com/obituaryform), by email to [obits@eastoregonian.com](mailto:obits@eastoregonian.com), by fax to 541-276-8314, placed via the funeral home or in person at the East Oregonian office. For more information, call 541-966-0818 or 1-800-522-0255, ext. 221.

## PUBLIC SAFETY LOG

### TUESDAY

9:01 a.m. - Milton-Freewater police took a report for the theft of a 2001 GMC Yukon from the 300 block of Northeast 13th Avenue.

9:04 a.m. - A Boardman resident on Wilson Lane told law enforcement a neighbor has been harassing her 13-year-old daughter.

9:09 a.m. - Umatilla police received a request to respond to Interstate 82 and Highway 730 to help an Oregon Department of Transportation employee with a female bicyclist who refused directions.

9:46 a.m. - A Milton-Freewater resident reported the theft of items from an unlocked shed on the 100 block of Southeast Fifth Avenue, and at 4:24 p.m. a caller on the 200 block of Northeast Fifth Avenue reported a break-in at a storage unit.

9:57 a.m. - Pendleton police tagged the first of five abandoned vehicles for towing. One was at Southeast Hailey Avenue and Eighth Street, two were in the area of Southeast Byers Place and 19th Street, and two more were around Southwest Hailey Avenue and 31st and 37th streets.

11:56 a.m. - Good Shepherd Medical Center, Hermiston, told the Morrow County Sheriff’s Office to be on the lookout for an Irrigon man who walked out of the hospital and was hallucinating and paranoid and needs to be back in the hospital.

12:26 p.m. - A Hermiston woman came to the city police department, 330 S. First St., and complained about having mold in her swamp cooler.

1:28 p.m. - Gunfire sent a herd of about two dozen deer over a hill near the Kilkenny Ranch, 79074 Highway 74, around 10 miles east of Heppner. The caller said there were at least two shots.

1:30 p.m. - The Morrow County Sheriff’s Office received a report of a son slapping his father across the face.

1:37 p.m. - An Irrigon resident on Columbia Lane reported a pit bull dog and a Rottweiler were chasing the neighbor’s goats.

4:06 p.m. - A caller at Simtek Industrial Controls Automation, 1706 N.W. 52nd St., Pendleton, reported the theft of his Pioneer CD player from his car.

4:23 p.m. - An Irrigon caller told the Morrow County Sheriff’s Office his stepfather said “snide and inflammatory things.”

11:17 p.m. - A woman told Pendleton police her husband kicked her out of the home.

11:52 p.m. - A Pendleton 911 caller caught a male trying to break into a car at Southwest Second Street and Nye Avenue.

## MEETINGS

will interview stakeholders regarding changes to walking, biking and driving access to Weston Middle School. Parents, bus drivers, residents and business owners surrounding the school, teachers/staff and others invested in improving safety and traffic flow are encouraged to attend. (Paula Warner 541-566-3551)

**MILTON-FREEWATER LIBRARY BOARD**, 4 p.m., Milton-Freewater Public Library, 8 S.W. Eighth Ave., Milton-Freewater. (541-938-5531)

**PORT OF MORROW COMMISSION SPECIAL MEETING**,

4 p.m., Port of Morrow, 2 Marine Drive, Boardman. Via conference call. (541-481-7678)

**UMATILLA COUNTY SPECIAL LIBRARY DISTRICT SPECIAL MEETING**, 5:15-8:15 p.m., Athena Public Library meeting room, 418 E. Main St., Athena. Annual Library Service Plan reports from last fiscal year will be presented. (Dea Nowell 541-966-0917)

**UMATILLA COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION**, 6:30 p.m., Umatilla County Justice Center, 4700 N.W. Pioneer Place, Pendleton. (541-278-6252)

**PENDLETON PLANNING COMMISSION**, 7 p.m., Pendleton City Hall, 501 S.W. Emigrant Ave., Pendleton. (Jutta Haliwicz 541-966-0240)

**NIOR CENTER BOARD**, 6 p.m., Stokes Landing Senior Center, 195 N.W. Opal Place, Irrigon. (Karen 541-922-3137)

**HEPPNER PLANNING COMMISSION**, 7 p.m., Heppner City Hall, 111 N. Main St., Heppner. (541-676-9618)

**MILTON-FREEWATER PLANNING COMMISSION**, 7 p.m., Milton-Freewater Public Library Albee Room, 8 S.W. Eighth Ave., Milton-Freewater. 6:30 p.m. study session, 7 p.m. regular meeting. (541-938-5531)

**WESTON PLANNING COMMISSION**, 7 p.m., Memorial Hall, 210 E. Main St., Weston. (541-566-3313)

## LOTTERY

**Tuesday, Nov. 28**  
Mega Millions  
10-17-47-51-61  
Mega Ball: 5  
Megaplier: 2  
Estimated jackpot: \$132 million  
Lucky Lines  
01-08-10-13-FREE-18-23-26-30

Estimated jackpot: \$23,000  
Pick 4  
1 p.m.: 3-5-6-7  
4 p.m.: 3-8-2-3  
7 p.m.: 8-6-8-7  
10 p.m.: 0-2-8-6

**Wednesday, Nov. 29**  
Pick 4  
1 p.m.: 5-0-6-9

### FRIDAY, DEC. 1

No meetings scheduled

### MONDAY, DEC. 4

STOKES LANDING SE-

## WILDHORSE RESORT & CASINO

11/30

### Cineplex Show Times

\$5 Classic Movie  
12/6 12:00 PM  
His Girl Friday

COCO 2D (PG)  
6:40

COCO 3D (PG)  
3:50\* 9:30

Justice League 2D (PG13)  
7:20

Justice League 3D (PG13)  
4:40 10:00

Wonder (PG)  
4:20 7:10 9:40

Daddy’s Home 2 (PG13)  
4:00 6:30 9:20

Thor: Ragnarok 2D (PG13)  
4:10 7:00 9:50

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