

Oregon joins effort to solve crimes against Native women

Gov. Brown signs bill aimed at increasing, improving criminal justice resources for Native cases

Associated Press

SALEM — Native American women have gone missing or been killed at alarming rates, federal and private studies show, and there is growing concern that confusion by law enforcement over who has jurisdiction can lead to lax pursuit of cases and insufficient data.

Oregon, home to nine federally recognized tribes or confederations of tribes, has now joined a movement to account for and solve more of the crimes.

Patricia Whitefoot, whose sister disappeared in 1987 in an unsolved case, watched as Gov. Kate Brown signed a bill Thursday that directs the state police to study how to increase and improve criminal justice resources on these cases.

"As families, we simply seek justice and healing of the heart," Whitefoot told lawmakers in written testimony last month.

After Brown signed the bill, Whitefoot told a reporter her sister, Daisy Mae Heath Tallman, was 29 when she went missing.

She was Whitefoot's youngest sister and lived with her in Washington state. She would be gone for long periods, fishing for salmon in traditional spots along the Columbia River that divides Washington from Oregon and visiting relatives on the Warm Springs reservation in Oregon. Then, in the autumn of 1987, she never returned to her home in White Swan, Washington.

"She was just a very self-reliant, self-sufficient individual who could take care of her business and what needed to be done, fiercely independent," said Whitefoot, who wore a red dress — representing missing and murdered indigenous women — otter furs, shell jewelry and moccasins to the bill signing ceremony.

Travis Hampton, superintendent of the Oregon State Police, told attendees, many of them Native American women, that he was emotionally invested in bringing results. He said he had been concerned about a lack of state police jurisdiction in Indian country but that it would be compensated for with collaboration among federal, state and local law enforcement.

"I will treat these women



AP Photos/Andrew Selsky

Patricia Whitefoot, below, a member of the Yakama tribe from White Swan, Washington, poses for a photo after Gov. Kate Brown signed a bill directing the state police to study how to improve criminal justice resources to solve cases of Native American women who have gone missing or been killed. Whitefoot's sister Daisy disappeared in 1987. The case was never solved. Whitefoot was involved in the effort to pass the bill in Oregon, and a similar one in Washington state earlier.



and girls, these sisters, these mothers, these daughters, as if they were my own," he said to applause.

Montana, Washington, Arizona and New Mexico have passed similar legislation. A bill reintroduced in the House of Representatives last week would expand tribes' access to some federal crime databases, establish protocols for handling cases of missing and slain Native Americans, and require annual reports.

The bill is named Savanna's Act, after Savanna LaFontaine-Greywind, who was killed while pregnant in 2017 in North Dakota. Her baby was cut from her womb but survived.

In urban areas alone, some 500 Native American women in 71 U.S. cities vanished or were killed, the Urban Indian Health Institute, a division of the Seattle Indian Health Board, reported last year. Most of the cases occurred since

2010. On some reservations, federal studies have shown women are killed at more than 10 times the national average.

Predators believe they can get away with abducting or killing American Indian women there because of scant law enforcement presence, said Rep. Tawna Sanchez, chief sponsor of the Oregon bill and the only Native American in the state Legislature.

Some tribes have no law enforcement, while the FBI might be able to dedicate only one agent to investigate crimes on sprawling reservations, Sanchez said.

The new Oregon law, which takes effect immediately, directs the state police to study how to increase and improve state criminal justice protective, responsive and investigative resources. It also calls for better systems for reporting, identification, investigation and rapid response to future and past cases.

LOCAL BRIEFING

Rain forecast for Memorial Day weekend

Spring storms saturated the region Monday night into Tuesday morning and the forecast looks for more of the same through Memorial Day.

"It's not going to be a barbecue kind of weekend," said Rob Brooks, forecaster for the National Weather Service in Portland.

Rain accumulation at the Eastern Oregon Regional Airport in Pendleton for Monday and Tuesday was 0.45 inches, Walla Walla Regional Airport got 0.23 inches. Hermiston Municipal Airport only received 0.15 inches.

Travelers on Interstate 84 east of Pendleton were faced with driving rain. Meacham received 0.6 inches. La Grande and much of the Wallowa Mountains got more than 0.8 inches.

The forecast for Wednesday and Thursday should be dry, but getting into the weekend there is a 20% to 30% chance of rain and thunderstorms Saturday through Monday with high temperatures 69 to 76 degrees in Pendleton, 71 to 79 in Hermiston and 66 to 72 in Heppner.

Helix students earn scholarships

PENDLETON — The Oregon Wheat Foundation awarded a total of seven \$1,000 scholarships to high school seniors this year, representing six counties or regions. Students were judged on their community involvement, academic achievement and an essay on a wheat industry topic.

Two of the scholarships went to students at Helix's Griswold High School.

Gavin Newtonson plans to attend the University of Idaho Agriculture Systems



Newtonson

Christman

Management Program, then return to the family farm after graduation. He is the son of Jeff and Sharilyn Newtonson. He was a member of the National Honor Society, and excelled in several sports including cross-country, basketball, and track. He was active in many community activities.

Hannah Christman plans to study medicine in college, focusing on neuroscience. She is graduating as ASB vice president. Hannah is active in Key Club and FBLA, and competed in cross-country, basketball, and track and field.

Morrow County works to connect students with jobs

Students in Morrow County will soon have the opportunity to work right in their own backyard through a new program, the Morrow County Student Internship Program. Several partners are involved in the program — Morrow County School District, Lone School District, the Port of Morrow, the Inter-Mountain Education Service District and multiple community businesses.

The program is funded through the Morrow Education Foundation.

The internships are open to high school seniors and juniors. Students will be employees of the IMESD and will be paid minimum wage. Students can receive high school credit for their work experience, but must maintain 90% attendance at school and at their place of work.

More than 25 businesses are on board to hire interns, including Bank of Eastern Oregon, City of Boardman, Columbia River Health, Port of Morrow, Morrow County Grain Growers, Blue Mountain Manufacturing, Boardman Foods and Lamb-Weston. Students will learn from medical providers, mechanics, analysts and IT professionals.

Students will start working this fall when school is back in session. Jobs are available for a semester or the entire school year. Students will work an average of 10 hours per week.

For information about the program, contact Kalie Davis, Workforce Training Program Manager at the Port of Morrow, at kalied@portofmorrow.com.

Keep your family safe from the West Nile Virus

SALEM — As the weather continues to warm up, Oregon health officials say it's important for people to protect themselves from disease-carrying mosquitoes. One of the illnesses to avoid is the West Nile virus. About one in five infected people may show signs of West Nile virus. People at risk of serious illness include individuals 50 and older, and people with immune-compromising conditions.

West Nile symptoms may include fever above 100 degrees and severe headache, stiff neck, mental confusion, muscle weakness, shaking, paralysis or rash. People should contact their health care provider if experiencing any of these symptoms.

Health officials are advising people to take precautions against mosquitoes to avoid the risk of infection, including preventing mosquito bites.

Hermiston man recovering after May 3 motorcycle crash

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian

A Hermiston man who was in a motorcycle crash on May 3 is still in the hospital recovering from a brain injury.

Nychal Gritz, 22, was injured in a single-vehicle crash outside of Stanfield. His father Jeff Gritz said in an email over the weekend that Nychal spent 12 days in Oregon Health & Science University Hospital's intensive care unit in Portland before being transferred to the hospital's trauma unit, where he remains.

Jeff said Nychal was "pretty unresponsive" the first few days due to swelling and bleeding in his brain (the *East Oregonian* originally reported he was awake during that time based on incorrect information released by the Umatilla County Sheriff's Office). He is now walking and eating with assistance and his short-term memory is unpredictable but improv-

ing, Jeff said. He should be moving to a rehab facility soon.

"He has multiple facial fractures and skull fractures that are non-operable and will heal on their own," he wrote on Saturday. "His biggest threat now is a small blood clot in his brain that is being medically treated, that could take up to several months. He should be discharged from the hospital early next week if he continues to improve over the weekend."

Nychal was a star baseball pitcher for Hermiston High School and played for Blue Mountain Community College last year. Jeff said community members have inquired about being able to send letters or donations to help cover medical bills. Letters to Nychal can be sent to P.O. Box 356, Hermiston, OR 97838. People can donate to an account in Nychal's name at Columbia Bank or search for "Nychal's Medical Fund-raiser" on Facebook.

"Nychal and our family are very thankful for family, friends and our Eastern Oregon communities that have reached out and sent prayers our way," Jeff said. "We truly appreciate it."

WILDHORSE RESORT & CASINO
5/22
Cineplex Show Times

\$5 Classic Movie Showing Today at 12PM
THE ENFORCER

John Wick: Chapter 3 Parablellum (R)
4:10p 7:00p 9:50p

A Dog's Journey (PG)
4:30p 6:50p 9:20p

Pokemon Detective Pikachu (PG)
4:40p 7:10p 9:40p

Avengers: Endgame (PG13)
3:40p* 7:20p 10:30p

The Hustle (PG13)
4:00p 6:10p 8:20p

*Matinee Pricing
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Pendleton, OR I-84 - Exit 216



501 South Main Street
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www.pendletonchamber.com

Seeking Private Housing Hosts

The Chamber lists private housing availability for Whisky Music Fest, Bike Week, & Round-Up. We have visitors calling the chamber - FREE listing fee for Whisky Fest!

N O W
Open Weekends!
Visitors Center
Saturday & Sunday
8:30a - 2:00p

First Citizens & Business Excellence Award Nominations

The Chamber will have nomination forms available on the website soon!
Who will you nominate in 2019?

Let'er Rent hosts K5 & Pendleton Record hosts 2nd Food Truck Night

Join this month's K5 host at Food Truck Night on May 25 4p-9p at Royaley Park! Food Truck vendors inquire to participate!

For more information visit:
WWW.PENDLETONCHAMBER.COM

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Chamber Ambassadors' Ribbon Cutting, Indian Lake May 2019

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THURSDAY, MAY 23
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HOSTED BY LET'ER RENT & THE PENDLETON RECORD

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