Indigenous Peoples Day serves to move past Columbus Day woes

Yellowhawk Tribal Health Center marks day with ceremony

By BEN LONERGAN
East Oregonian

MISSION — With the United States Post Office and many other federal organizations closed in celebration of Columbus Day, Oregonians and those in numerous other cities and states around the United States held events in recognition of American Indian heritage for Indigenous Peoples Day.

Yellowhawk Tribal Health Center welcomed staff and community members Monday morning for an Indigenous People's Day recognition event. The event, which involved a smudge for healing and a "Walk 'n' Talk in our Mocs," gathered approximately two dozen people throughout the morning at Yellowhawk's campus.

Smudging is the ceremonial burning of sacred herbs for the purpose of the healing, cleansing or blessing of an individual or group.

Kelsey Burns, an alcohol and drug addiction education program coordinator at Yellowhawk, opened the morning with a song and prayer in the Teekinteekin Outdoor Area at Yellowhawk. Elsewhere in the building people could be seen in moccasins and other traditional regalia as they went about their day.

Burns said that to him and many others Columbus Day has long represented the breaking apart of the indigenous community and the celebration and recognition of Indigenous Peoples Day in Oregon is restorative.

"We are strong, resilient and we are there for each other," said Burns. "From all our trauma we fight forward and watch the restoration spread like wildfire."

Staff photo by Ben Lonergan

Fred Hill, left, and Kelsey Burns lead a walking group to celebrate Indigenous Peoples Day on Monday morning. The walk, titled "Walk 'n' Talk in our Mocs," gathered a small group of people to stroll the grounds of the Yellowhawk Tribal Health Center and Nixyaawii Governance Center.

Oregon Gov. Kate Brown signed a proclamation in September declaring Oct. 14, 2019, Indigenous Peoples Day. The proclamation outlined the multitude of contributions made by indigenous people and the ways that they have "substantially shaped the character of Oregon."

Former Happy Canyon Princess Tayler Craig, who was present at the morning's events, said that Indigenous Peoples Day offers an opportunity to educate youth about their culture in schools and at home. Craig recalled growing up and learning about Christopher Columbus in schools in a way that glorified him. She spoke of the divide that occurred when they were told to celebrate Columbus at school but despise him at home.

"For the day to be changed and for us to teach others what we have known feels like finally being recognized as a people," Craig said. "I hope as a stronger people we help others to find that strength."

Craig went on to explain that while Oregon and several other states defining Columbus Day as Indigenous Peoples Day is an impressive start, there is still more to be done. She said that she hopes those on the East Coast and other places where settlers destroyed indigenous culture can find ways to regain and celebrate their heritage.

For Fred Hill, a Umatilla language, drum and dance teacher at Nixyaawii Community School, Indigenous Peoples Day signifies the shift in learning and understanding of indigenous history. Hill recalls, when he was younger, not realizing who Columbus truly was or what he had done to indigenous people. He says that the changing of education has helped youth to realize and be proud of their culture in a way that wasn't common before.

"To have that realization that we have always been here is powerful," Hill said. "It's unfathomable to think that we have been here even prior to our treaty and prior to the so-called discovery of the country."

Hill credits the shift in recognition to the internet and wider teaching and acceptance of indigenous cultures. He says that the day provides an excellent education opportunity for everyone.

Veterans get hand up

Staff photo by Kathy Aney

Oregon Health & Science University medical student Shane Griffin examines Marine veteran Fred Irons' eyes during Saturday's Veteran Stand Down at the Hermiston Community Center. The event offered eye screening, lunch, screening for HIV/Hepatitis C, legal aid, housing help and other assistance. At one corner of the venue, homeless veterans selected from a cache of free items that included blankets, socks, hygiene supplies and additional items.

Trial for former auto dealer delayed

Walla Walla Union-Bulletin

WALLA WALLA, Wash. — The trial for a former Walla Walla businessman, who operated a chain of car dealerships in Eastern Washington, Idaho and Oregon, has been moved.

Mark Gilbert was indicted by a grand jury in November 2017 on one count of bank fraud related to the purchase of a home in Hawaii in 2014. His trial most recently has been rescheduled from Oct. 15 to March 2, 2020, in U.S. District Court in Spokane, Washington. The court will appear by video from Yakima and Gilbert from Spokane.

According to court documents, Gilbert has pleaded not guilty to the charge, which alleges he made false statements to a federally insured credit union to obtain a $745,000 mortgage loan. The maximum penalty for the crime is up to 30 years in prison and/or a fine of up to $1 million.

In an indictment filed by acting U.S. Attorney Joseph Harrington, Gilbert is alleged to have falsely claimed he was buying the Hawaii home for his parents and fabricated financial statements to convince the credit union to fund the mortgage.

He also allegedly provided down payment for the home and hid that fact to avoid disclosing the Hawaii property as an asset in bankruptcy proceedings filed in June 2014 with U.S. District Court in Eastern Washington.

There have been many previous allegations against Gilbert in his ownership of car dealerships, including those in Walla Walla, College Place, Milton-Freewater, Pendleton, Moses Lake and Moscow, Idaho.

The Oregon Department of Motor Vehicles in 2013 launched an investigation into the Pendleton branch after the auto dealer failed to submit a title to a vehicle within 90 days and issued temporary registration permits without submitting titles and registrations to the state. The Washington Attorney General's Office in 2013 also sued Gilbert' dealerships in Washington and Idaho, alleging they failed to pay off buyers' trade-in vehicles under Washington and Idaho laws, which resulted in some buyers paying on new and old vehicles at the same time.

BRIEFLY

Saturday crash kills one, sends two to hospital

HERMISTON — A two-vehicle crash on Saturday afternoon left one dead, according to Oregon State Police.

Lynn Dale Hiatt, 73, of Pasco, Washington, was pronounced dead at the scene after the crash at the Interstate 84 and U.S. 395 interchange in Umatilla County.

A preliminary investigation revealed that the pickup driven by Hiatt had been traveling westbound on I-84 and had taken Exit 188 and failed to negotiate the turn onto U.S. 395 northbound.

He went across the southbound lanes of 395, hitting the left-hand side of a semi-trailer. That driver — Andrei Ceban, 30, of Vancouver, Washington — was attempting to get on I-84 heading westbound, OSP said.

Hiatt's passengers — Remedios Hiatt, 76, and Lucia Casey, 54, both of Pasco, Washington — were both transported to Good Shepherd Medical Center by ground ambulance.

Ceban was not injured in the crash.

The I-84 westbound off-ramp, westbound on-ramp and U.S. 395 milepost 12 was closed for approximately two hours during the investigation.

The crash remains under investigation. OSP was assisted by the Umatilla County Sheriff's Office, Stanfield Police Department, Oregon Department of Transportation and Umatilla Fire District 1.

M-F cop stuns fleeing suspect

MILTON-FREEWATER — Milton-Freewater police used a stun gun to stop a man from fleeing. The suspect, Jesse Patrick Jackson, 32, now faces multiple charges.

Milton-Freewater police in a news release reported an officer at 3:13 p.m. observed a 1996 Ford Taurus with Washington plates speeding north on the 1000 block of Lamb Street. The car turned into the driveway of St. Francis-Assisi Church, 925 Vining St., and continued speeding east.

The officer followed and saw the car zip by the stop sign at the intersection of Vining Street and Northwest Eighth Avenue. The car turned east on Eighth Avenue and the officer turned on his car's overhead lights, but the Taurus driver did not stop.

The chase passed through Evans Street, Northwest 11th Avenue, North Main Street and Northwest 10th Avenue. The car finally stopped on the 10th block of Northwest Sixth Avenue, where the driver took off running.

The officer recognized Jackson, ran after him, shot him with a stun gun to end the pursuit and put the cuffs on him.

Milton-Freewater police also reported the officer found drugs on Jackson and hauled him to the Umatilla County Jail, Pendleton, on the following charges: felony and misdemeanor fleeing, reckless driving, reckless endangering, felony methamphetamine possession, tampering with physical evidence and interfering with a peace officer.

State court records show Jackson lives in Milton-Freewater and is serving three years probation after pleading guilty in Umatilla County in March to felon in possession of a firearm.

— East Oregonian staff

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