



Andy Porte/Walla Walla Union-Bulletin, File
Patrick Brennan, a "living history restorer" with the 10th Cavalry Regiment, talks with Harold King and Terry Drinnon in 2017 about the regiment's role in the Spanish-American War during a "Welcome Home to Historic Walla Walla VA" job and information fair at the Jonathan M. Wainwright Memorial VA Medical Center. The Department of Veterans Affairs in March 2022 released a report proposing to make the center an outpatient clinic.

Changes:

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the residential rehabilitation treatment program housed there to Spokane, where such a program doesn't exist.

According to Walla Walla VA Medical Center Public Affairs Officer Linda Wondra, the proposed changes to Walla Walla will not lead to any changes at the local level in La Grande, which has provided services to veterans from as far away as Pendleton.

"At the current time, we have no knowledge or concern that the La Grande clinic will be affected in any way," Wondra said. "All our sites of care are expected to continue providing care as before."

Per the Spokane paper, relocating services to Spokane and Richland would serve a larger number of veterans than the Walla Walla area, the VA report says. According to an assessment of VA's Inland Northwest market, about 5,000 veterans enrolled in VA health care services live within an hour drive of Walla Walla, while more than 9,100 live within an hour of Richland and nearly 29,000 within an hour of Spokane.

Not all local veterans oppose the plan to move to outpatient services. Vietnam War destroyer sailor George

Oblick of Athena said that's how he uses the Walla Walla VA now.

"The change wouldn't affect me," he said. "They just expanded dental services and eyeglasses there. They put up a whole new building."

And if he needed surgery, the VA would send him to Portland or pay for it at St. Anthony Hospital, Pendleton, or Providence St. Mary Medical Center, Walla Walla.

"I wouldn't want to undergo surgery at the Walla Walla VA," he said.

A statement from the Walla Walla VA stated the proposals are strictly recommendations, with nothing set in stone to date. Any potential changes to the infrastructure of health care within Veterans Affairs could be several years away, depending on congressional decision making.

The Walla Walla VA is continuing efforts to strengthen its regional health care services in areas with a high volume of veterans, such as Richland and Yakima. Moving forward, the Asset and Infrastructure Review Commission is set to conduct public hearings on any new recommendations heading into January 2023 — input and feedback at these hearings could impact the extent of the recommendations to the Jonathan M. Wainwright Memorial VA Medical Center in Walla Walla.

CTUIR:

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Whitman alum Roger Amerman, who also is a member of the Choctaw Nation, helped bring the tribes and college together.

A kwalk ineet is not seen off a reservation very often, let alone at a college campus. In fact, organizers are saying this is the first time such a structure has been built at a college or university.

Sampson said he hopes the experience is educational and helps students at Whitman learn more about the land on which they attend school.

History of the kwalk ineet

The long tent is a structure used by Plateau Native American tribes. While they are made from canvas today, historically they were made from tule — or bullrush — mats.

Sampson said the kwalk ineet is a very important part of the native people's history in this region.

"This is the lodge where families gathered and lived for many years," he said.

Such structures have had many uses throughout history. Larger tents, such as the one at Whitman, provided a place to gather.

"It's a place where families live, where teachings are conducted, where the life-style of the people occurred," he said. "These larger ones were also used for ceremonial gatherings. When there were feasts, when there were namings, when there were memorial services or funerals. These were all conducted inside of these."

Long tents were of great importance during food gathering, Sampson said.

"As the people would travel by horse or foot, they would come to the places they had camped many times before. They would build a frame from tepee poles and would cover it with tule mats," he said. "They were temporary structures that would be



Greg Lehman/Walla Walla Union-Bulletin
Don Sampson, executive director of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, addresses the gathering Monday, April 18, 2022, at the opening ceremony of a weeklong Plateau Long Tent event on Whitman College's Ankeny Field, Walla Walla.

used for the season around a food to be gathered."

While they are not often used for permanent living structures today, Sampson said, their use for ceremonial gatherings remain.

They also have an educational use, showing what life was like for people here many generations ago.

Whitman's Long Tent project

The project at Whitman College began Monday, April 18, with an opening ceremony.

Sampson, Amerman and leaders of nearby tribes took part.

Several hundred people — mostly college students, but some community members as well — attended to check out the kwalk ineet and listen to speeches.

Sampson told the U-B before the event that he hoped attendees would get a better sense of the history of the land and the Waluulapam people, which greatly predates U.S.

history in the area.

"The Walla Walla Valley was our homeland long before any non-natives came here," Sampson said. "That was our homeland, and it still is today. . . I always hear people say, 'Oh, I'm a fifth-generation farmer.' I say, 'Well, you know, I've been here for about 10,000 generations. So the place where you live is the place that is my home.'"

Still, he said the ceremony April 18 would not be about scolding people and would instead be about reconciliation and unity.

This held true.

"I think it's important to acknowledge our people who came from this land here for thousands and thousands of generations," he told the crowd at the ceremony. "But today, we share this land with each one of you. . . Today, we can rejoice as one people. We are all one family, together. It doesn't matter what color your skin is."

That's not to say he ignored negative aspects of history. In

IF YOU GO

Through the rest of the week, educational events that are open to the public will be held on the Whitman College campus. Speakers will talk on several topics relating to the local land and its native people. More details can be found at bit.ly/longtentwhitman. The events all lead up to a closing ceremony Sunday, April 24. Details of the closing ceremony have not yet been announced.

fact, he connected it to current events.

"I was watching TV about people in Ukraine being invaded," he said. "And I got to thinking, 'You know, it wasn't that long ago that our people saw that same thing happen to them. It was a difficult time for us, but we are still here today. You can see us.'"

Other speakers at the opening ceremony included Amerman, other native leaders and representatives from Whitman College.

"As I stand before the long tent today, I am filled with a sense of wonder and thankfulness," outgoing Whitman President Kathy Murray said. "Increasing our campus's connection to the Walla Walla Valley's past present and future has been a real priority for me."

Sampson told the U-B he thinks an ongoing relationship between the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation and the college can be a good thing, both for the college and for the tribes.

"None of our kids can afford to go to school there, and now they may offer scholarships," Sampson said. "That's a gesture of reconciliation, and we are grateful for that."

Whitman spokesperson Gillian Frew confirmed to the U-B that the college is working with CTUIR on scholarships for students from local tribes.

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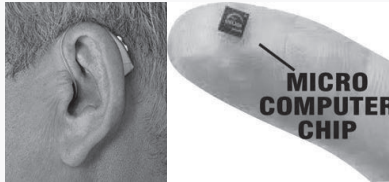


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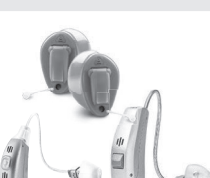
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