



Spilyay Tymoo

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Pi-Ume-Sha Traditional Parade riders on the way to the powwow grounds.

Spilyay staff photos.



Dancer (left) and Black Lodge drum group (above) at Pi-Ume-Sha.

Hopeful news for the mill

By Dave McMechan
Spilyay Tymoo

The Warm Springs Forest Products Industries mill could benefit from an agreement with a wood products firm that focuses on the Japanese lumber market.

The company is Vanport International, which would manage the operation of the WSFPI mill, according to an initial agreement between the company and the tribes.

The focus of the mill would be on production of more specialty wood products, targeting the Japanese market, which values fine-grained lumber from Oregon.

The change at WSFPI could result in the return of many jobs lost at the mill, said Tribal Councilwoman Aurolyn Stwyer.

Council resolution

Earlier this year, the Council was forced to partially close the mill, reducing employment from over 150 to 60.

The partial closure was necessary, as the U.S. lumber market continued to decline. Without a long-term and unsustainable subsidy from the tribes, the mill could not operate as it had in the past, and the employee layoff was implemented in February.

Tribal Council, acting as the WSFPI board, directed the staff to continue the search for a way to bring the mill back into production — more employment in the community being a Council priority.

WSFPI had done business with Vanport International in the past, so the

tribes were familiar with the firm. Through negotiation, the tribes and Vanport came to a preliminary agreement resulting in the Tribal Resolution WSFPI 08-02, directing the Secretary-Treasurer to negotiate a final and comprehensive agreement.

Japanese market

Part of the problem at the mill has been the production of wood products that do not take full advantage of the quality of the tribal timber, said Stywer. High-quality wood was being used to produce lumber that did not require such high quality, she said.

Through Vanport International, the situation could be corrected with jobs restored at the mill.

Vanport Manufacturing began in 1967 as log broker and manufacturer of construction lumber, active in the American and Japanese markets.

The company's specialty was sorting and producing for the best value from high quality timber in the region. Vanport eventually change its emphasis from log exporting to manufacturing lumber for Japanese home construction.

Customer demand in Japan rapidly grew, outpacing increases in the capacity of Vanport's sawmill, according to the company website.

"In order to supply its growing Japanese customer base, Vanport established marketing arrangements to sell lumber from other producers in the U.S. Pacific Northwest and British Columbia in exchange for its knowledge in manufacturing and quality control," the website says.

Many lessons learned in victory over addiction

By Leslie Mitts
Spilyay Tymoo

The first thing Merle Kalama likes to share about her story is that she is grateful. The second is that she is sorry.

Kalama, 55, often speaks of her battle with addictions through work with local organizations like the Meth Task Force.

Today she is a dedicated teacher at Early Childhood Education with a strong pride for her community and culture, but for decades Kalama spent her time dealing drugs and clashing with law enforcement.

Her eventual success is something that she credits to help from God and family.

Sober since 2004, Kalama has spent time in and out of jail, had her children taken away and gone through treatment twice.

"I put my family through a whole lot of trauma, sadness and hardship for other family members," Kalama said.

A somewhat shy woman with a sweet demeanor, Kalama hardly seems to fit the description that she gives of herself in prior years.

The mother to a 36-year-old son, 26 year-old daughter and 20-year-old son, Kalama is also a grandmother of five (with one more on the way).

Kalama was born in Warm Springs on March 13, 1953. Her father, Nick Kalama, who was the late Paiute Chief Paulina, and her mother Viola Kalama raised her in the community along with Kalama's older siblings Edna Johnson,



Courtesy photo.

Merle Kalama is now able to share her newfound love for her culture with young students as a teacher at Early Childhood Education.

Byron Kalama, Brenda Kalama-Scott and younger brother "Spunky" Kalama.

"I was fortunate to have a mother and father that did a really good job of giving us the positive things in life,"

Kalama said of her happy childhood.

Raised in a religious household and baptized in the Presbyterian Church, Kalama said, "That's my basis is my spirituality and my thankfulness that I

am here today."

Kalama's siblings were sent to boarding school and she remained the only child in her household until she was 10 years old.

"I got to have Mom and Dad to myself," Kalama said. "I was spoiled."

As a child in a part of town called "Old Hollywood," many of her neighbors didn't have running water or electricity in their homes, Kalama said.

She considers herself fortunate to have had both in her home growing up due to a father that she calls a "jack of all trades."

Still, Kalama added, "I never consider myself any better or any different than anyone else."

At a young age, Kalama's drug and alcohol use escalated, mainly due to what she describes as simply curiosity and experimentation.

Cigarettes became the first object of curiosity in Kalama's life.

Because she grew up surrounded by ranchers and farmers who often smoked, Kalama explained, "I never thought it was a bad thing."

When her father discovered her smoking, however, he ordered Kalama to smoke the entire pack.

That wasn't the end of her experimentation, however. Because her family actively attended fairs and rodeos throughout the region, Kalama found opportunities as young as 10 or 11 years old to sneak her first drink of alcohol.

"I liked it," Kalama said. "It wasn't the taste. It was just the feeling I guess. The feeling of euphoria."

The first drink led to a habit of

sneaking alcohol along with other kids her age during time spent at fairs and celebrations from the time she turned 13. At that time in her life, Kalama said, "It was just kind of a weekend thing."

However, around the time Kalama turned 15 or 16 she began to experiment with mind-altering drugs and continue to push the limits of her lifestyle.

"I started running with older people," Kalama added. "I wasn't hanging with the teenagers."

At the age of 16 Kalama found she was able to get into bars, and started selling bootleg alcohol in high school.

"I don't know what I was looking for," Kalama said. Because of her desire to "grow up in the fast lane," Kalama missed out on the traditional teenage experience, she added.

Though Kalama spent years rebelling, it isn't something that she feels was caused by her family life.

"My parents were very strict with me, just with my older siblings as well as myself," Kalama said. "We had to work for what we got."

That meant doing chores at home to earn things like television privileges and spending summers working in berry fields to earn extra money.

In part that's how Kalama learned a lesson that would follow her throughout life and prompt her to continue selling drugs: "Behind it all is the almighty dollar," Kalama said.

As for not attending boarding school with her peers, Kalama said, "I don't know if it's a good thing or a bad thing."

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