

Colville Tribe teaching traditional fishing method

BRIDGEPORT, Wash. (AP) — Colville Tribal elder LeRoy Williams has fished all his life using the traditional methods of fishing with hoop nets and dip nets. Now, the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation has hired him to test his handmade traditional nets and to teach others how to use them.

The tribe hopes newly taught members can help catch some of the tens of thousands of salmon expected to return to the upper Columbia River once the Chief Joseph Hatchery is up and running.

The tribe is also testing methods so that individual tribal members can catch fish without leaving the reservation.

"I think it's important to have a toolbox full of methods," Joe Peone, director of the tribe's Fish and Wildlife Department, told The Wenatchee World.

The tribe plans to build more scaffolds below Chief Joseph Dam next year and offer their use to tribal members who want to fish in traditional ways, Peone said.

The tribe is also building a weir that will span the Okanogan River, roughly fashioned after those used by Okanogan Indians a century ago. Next year, they'll test floating nets in deep waters of the Columbia River.

"You're going to see the tribes doing some things you may not have ever seen in your life, but they're things we have done traditionally," Peone said.

LGL Ltd., an environmental research company in Ellensburg, is building a temporary weir on the Okanogan River to trap fish as they head upstream. It plans to test the weir this month and next summer to look at how the weir changes water flows, ero-

sion, and fish behavior. If the tests are successful, the tribe will apply for permits to install a permanent weir that can be used at certain times to catch salmon, including those raised at Chief Joseph Hatchery.

Meanwhile, Williams, who lives in Nespelem, plans to travel to each of the four districts on the Colville Indian Reservation to teach traditional fishing methods. Many tribal members abandoned those traditional fishing skills when Columbia River dams limited their access to fishing, the newspaper reported.

In recent weeks, Williams has been testing his handmade gear from two new 26-foot-long scaffolds that the Colville tribes built this summer. Usually he's with his son, Mylan, and they're teaching anyone who wants to join them.

Several people came to learn, and many brought their children.

The hoop net measures up to 8 feet in diameter and is attached to a long piece of netting. The net is then roped to a pole that's tied to the scaffold and lowered vertically into the water. The current pulls the net downstream, and pushes it out like a balloon. The pole jiggles when a fish swims in and hits the net.

A dip net has a much smaller net attached to a 33-foot pole to reach into the deep water. A string running the length of the pole tells the fisherman — who's fishing in the dark — which side the net is on. When a salmon swims in, a buckskin tie that's holding the net open comes undone and the net slides around the loop and closes shut.

Using it is no easy task, Williams said. "It's a balancing act."

The hatchery and an agreement with the state that brings more fish to the upper Columbia will mean plenty of fish for everyone, including nontribal sports fishermen, Peone said. The hatchery is scheduled to be completed December of next year.

Peone said he hopes that when sports fishermen see the new scaffolds on the Columbia River or any of the new methods the Colvilles are using, they'll understand that the tribe is exercising its fishing right, and are fishing within the boundary of the Colville Indian Reservation. "I think scaffolds are a good icon for tribal fisheries, but people in the upper Columbia haven't seen scaffolds for so long — it's been generations," he said.

"The tribe is rekindling the old traditions, and old traditions make tribal culture," he said.

Choctaws' first female chief

PHILADELPHIA, Miss. (AP) — The Mississippi Band of Choctaws inaugurated their first female chief this week, with "Our Moment in History" as the theme.

The Tribal Council held a closed swearing-in for Phyllis Anderson at 9 a.m., on Tuesday, with her official inauguration at 11:30 a.m. in The Arena at Golden Moon Hotel and Casino.

Her inaugural parade started at 10 a.m., temporarily closing Highway 16, said Erica Clemmons, spokeswoman for the Pearl River Resort.

The parade route began near the Choctaw Central baseball field, traveling east to the casino.

Anderson got 56 percent of the vote last month, receiving 2,139 votes to 1,602 for current chief Beasley Denson and 76 for Shirley Berg.

She also won an earlier runoff against Denson, but it was thrown out because of alleged voting irregularities in the 10-candidate primary.

Denson, who cast the deciding vote to throw out the first election after the Tribal Council deadlocked, conceded in a memo dated Sept. 13, calling on members to give Anderson their full cooperation and support.

"A majority of Choctaw voters have voted for change in leadership and we must honor and respect the majority's decision," he wrote. "We are grateful to enjoy a peaceful, representative democracy in the United States and on the Choctaw Indian Reservation."

New Mexico monument reopens archaeological sites

FRIJOLES CANYON, New Mexico (AP) — The prehistoric Native American archaeological sites that fill the heart of northern New Mexico's Bandelier National Monument have reopened to visitors, three months after the largest wildfire in the state's recorded history sent employees scrambling to save rare artifacts and irreplaceable artwork.

The monument's visitor center and biggest concentration of prehistoric cultural sites survived the fire and a second threat — post-fire flooding that sent ash, sediment and charred debris into the heart of the monument.

But the hazardous conditions kept the sites off-limits for weeks, until employees began welcoming shuttle buses of visitors back to the canyon Monday.

"It's great to have people back in the park," said Rod Torrez, Bandelier's chief of interpretation, who was among the park officials there when the first bus pulled up. "I was expecting it to be quiet this first week, but people have been waiting a long time to get here."

The first bus arrived with 18 passengers, including Dan and Mary Lee of Traverse City, Michigan.

The couple was in New Mexico celebrating their 50th anniversary. They decided to extend their trip by a day to see the sights at Frijoles Canyon, including the kivas dug into the canyon floor for ceremonies, the stone pueblo walls that surround them, the wildflowers that have overtaken the area and the dwellings carved by the ancestors of modern Native Americans into the canyon walls.

"We're really lucky," said Mary Lee, who was ready for the short hike through the canyon with her backpack, hat and hiking poles. "This is the purpose of our trip, to visit prehistoric Indian sites."

Every bus after the first was filled to capacity with dozens of visitors waiting their turn for the next hike. The visitors came from California, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Florida and even Germany.

This marks one of the busiest times of year for Bandelier, which sees about 238,000 visitors annually. Parks officials said they wanted to open the canyon given the upcoming annual balloon fiesta in Albuquerque is expected to draw thousands of

tourists to the state.

Park Superintendent Jason Lott said he won't mind being busy.

"That's the business we're supposed to be in," he said. "It's resource management, and it's visitor experience. It's been closed for three months, and it's not healthy for the resource, it's not healthy for the staff, and it's not healthy for the visitors for us not to be doing this."

The buses will run seven days a week through October.

By November, Lott said tourist season should be waning and the park plans to open the canyon so visitors can once again make the drive down the scenic canyon on their own. More trails are also expected to reopen later this fall.

Park officials said they have eagerly awaited the day visitors could again enjoy what is undoubtedly the most popular area of the sprawling park.

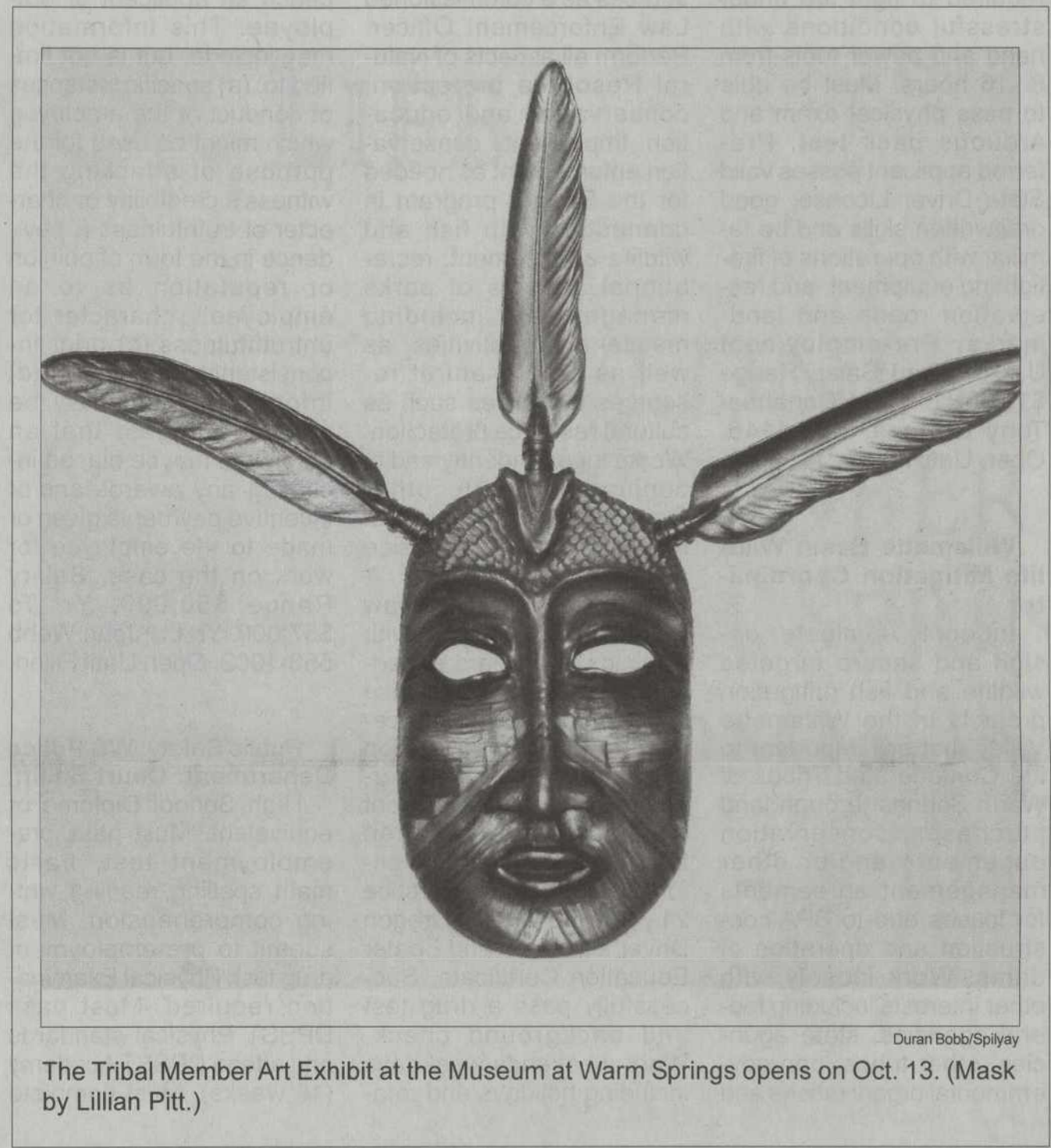
Tucked into northern New Mexico's ancient canyons, Bandelier has a long human history that stretches back more than 10,000 years. Aside from Native Americans, Spanish settlers and the Civilian Conservation Corp centuries later also left their mark on the area.

Nearly two-thirds of the monument was scorched during the Las Conchas fire, which started June 26 after a tree fell on a power line miles (kilometers) away. The flames raced across mesa tops and down canyons dotted with hundreds of archaeological sites.

The monument's employees were left scrambling that afternoon to save pieces of prehistoric pottery, rare artifacts and more modern-day Native American artwork. They used blankets, old uniforms and even the American flag to wrap the pieces to be transported out of the canyon to safety.

The fire stopped a mile (1.6 kilometer) from the monument's largest concentration of prehistoric cultural sites. Also spared were a collection of historic buildings constructed by workers during the New Deal and the newly renovated \$3.2 million visitor center.

The blaze destroyed more than five dozen homes in the surrounding mountains and threatened one of the nation's premier nuclear weapons laboratories in Los Alamos. Since then, the whole region has been struggling to recover.



The Tribal Member Art Exhibit at the Museum at Warm Springs opens on Oct. 13. (Mask by Lillian Pitt.)

Alaska voters weighing in: salmon vs. gold

JUNEAU, Alaska (AP) — The battle over a copper and gold mine near one of the world's premier salmon fisheries is headed to the ballot in a vote this week that has turned a normally sleepy local election into a national environmental debate.

Voters in southwest Alaska's Lake and Peninsula Borough are deciding whether to ban large-scale resource extraction activity, including mining, that would destroy or degrade salmon habitat. The measure is aimed squarely at Pebble Mine, the massive gold-and-copper prospect near the headwaters of Bristol Bay.

The debate surrounding Pebble has attracted the attention of chefs, Robert Redford and big-name jewelers who have vowed not to sell any gold coming from the project.

But the vote will almost certainly not be the last word on how — or whether — the mine is built.

"Among other things, the question in front of the Lake and Peninsula voters is about changes to land use that the Alaska attorney general says is unenforceable as a matter of law," said Mike Heatwole, a spokesman for Pebble Limited Partnership, the group promot-

ing the mine project.

Pebble Partnership sued to keep the "Save the Salmon" initiative off the ballot, arguing in part that the measure would improperly bypass the role of the local planning commission. State court Judge John Suddock denied that request, noting Alaska's Supreme Court has given deference to initiatives absent proof they would do something unlawful. He put the case on hold until Nov. 7, to allow for the vote and challenges.

The vote is the latest skirmish in the fight over a project that supporters say could create up to 1,000 long-term jobs in economically-depressed rural Alaska but that opponents fear could fundamentally change the landscape and disrupt, if not destroy, a way of life.

The mine is a joint venture of Canada-based Northern Dynasty Minerals Ltd. and Anglo American plc of the United Kingdom.

The companies have spent hundreds of millions of dollars scoping out the deposit, which Northern Dynasty has described as the largest undeveloped deposit of its type in the world, with the potential of producing 53 billion pounds of copper, 50 million ounces of gold and 2.8

billion pounds of molybdenum over nearly 80 years.

The mine would be directly above Iliamna Lake, the largest producer of sockeye salmon in the world.

This year, the commercial harvest of salmon was valued at nearly \$138 million, which doesn't include fish caught by Alaska Natives for subsistence. The Bristol Bay Native Corp., which has more than 8,000 shareholders with ties to the region, is opposed to the mine.

Jason Metrokin, Bristol Bay Native corp.'s chief executive, recently said in a statement that Pebble presents an "unacceptable risk to Bristol Bay salmon, which have supported our communities for thousands of years" while providing an important commercial, food and cultural resource.

Pebble Mine would be located 200 miles southwest of Anchorage and has been described as the potentially the world's largest man-made excavation. Though Heatwole said Pebble hasn't completed a pre-feasibility study or formally submitted a mine plan, critics say the potential footprint of the project could cover 15 square miles, with an open pit and network of roads and power lines.

"It's not a NIMBY thing so much as a survival thing," said Scott Kendall, an Anchorage attorney for the Save Our Salmon ballot group. He likened it to putting a nuclear plant next to an elementary school. "To these people, it's completely inappropriate and incompatible with the life they want to live."

The region around Bristol Bay is sparsely populated, dotted by small communities mostly cut off from the road system and generally accessible only by plane. About 1,600 people live in Lake and Peninsula Borough, which is roughly the size of West Virginia, covering about 23,780 square miles.

The landscape is pristine, stark, rugged, boasting wildlife like walrus, moose, bears and caribou. For a short period each summer, the area bustles with fishing activity, a leading sector of the local economy.

Over the last several years, there's been lobbying surrounding the project both sides. Ads, alternately touting the mine's economic potential or casting it as dangerous and wrong for Alaska, frequently appear on statewide TV.

For Greg Anelson, the vote is less about Pebble Mine than it is about land-use rights.