



Tribal members work to preserve their language

CROW RESERVATION, Mont. (AP) — On a weekday morning, teacher Janice Wilson leads a class of Wyola second-graders in a Crow song, their hands and their mouths in motion at the same time.

Wyola, a small town not far from the Wyoming border, is a close-knit community on the Crow Reservation. Most of the people who live in the town are members of the tribe.

The children sit at their desks, their eyes on Wilson, as they sign the words they sing using the Plains Indian sign language. Their young voices echo the words of their ancestors.

Before they sing the words to "The Red-Headed Wolf," Wilson reminds them of the song's historical context. In the earlier days of the Crow people, the wolves would run in a family called a pack and could kill all kinds of buffalo, she tells them.

"And they would be fat and even the dogs are fat, and when the men are really full and they're just happy and they smoke their peace pipes, they will say—what?"

"Ah ah oolah, ah ah oolah," the students answer, and then they sing the song a cappella, in unison, in confident voices.

Thirty-four miles north of Wyola on the campus of Little Big Horn College in Crow Agency, Lanny Real Bird teaches conversational Crow to young and older adults. The students, sitting at several long tables, review

dozens of words they've learned over the course of a semester, including "eeh," "baaleetaa," "itchlik," "xawiiik" (yes, no, good, bad.)

They also practice phrases they might use in everyday life, such as "aweduuxaashik" —"holding firm."

"It goes back to warrior times, when our enemies came and we would tell each other 'Aweduuxaashik!' It's almost like a military saying," Real Bird said.

Like the elementary students, the adults combine spoken words with sign language. The movements and gestures, which often mimic the words' actions, reinforce the learning of the language, Real Bird said.

Some of the students want to learn the language to be able to speak it with their parents; others hope to pass it down to a younger generation.

"My dad is Crow and my whole family is Crow, so it really helps me understand what they're saying," said Jessica Hebdon, a business administration student from Hardin. "You can pick up words and then you can fill in the rest and you understand a lot more."

The Crow Nation has a membership of nearly 13,500, with an estimated 75 percent living on the reservation or in towns close by. About one-third are children under 18; those 18 to 35 also are about one-third of the population.

Crow is still spoken among

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adult members of the south-central Montana tribe. During public meetings, an opening prayer is said in Crow, and other speakers, in the course of a talk, will move easily between English and Crow.

Crows have more native speakers left than any tribe in Montana, said Janine Pease, head of the tribe's Education Department.

"There's no other tribe that has this level of fluency," Pease said. "Among people my age, it's like 85 percent fluency."

The problem for the Crow Tribe lies with its youngest members, Pease said. Parents of small children rely mostly on English to communicate with their offspring, and the Crow language isn't getting passed down.

Pease has a record of the decline in fluency among Crow children, thanks in part to work done by a former Hardin Schools administrator, Cheryl Crawley. Crawley, while working on a doctorate through the University of

California at Berkeley, tracked the level of fluency among school-aged Crow children.

An 82 percent fluency rate among Crow children in the Hardin schools in 1969 dipped to 24 percent by 2002. A recent study done by the tribe found that only 3 percent of 335 preschool students were fluent, and 14 percent had limited fluency.

On the other end of the spectrum, 36 percent have no knowledge of the language and 29 percent have limited understanding.

"This... tells us that if we don't do (language immersion), that within 20 years there will be no children speaking Crow," Pease said. "We have in sight the death of our language."

In January, Pease submitted a grant proposal to immerse tribal Head Start and Songbird Daycare children 60 percent of the time in the language at school, and work with their parents to boost the level of fluency.

"Language immersion is about fluency," said Pease, who hopes soon to get a response to the proposal. "This is not learning words for fun, cute little things. This is not learning colors and numbers. This is full conversations that 3-year-olds can conduct."

Head Start and day care teachers and staff are fluent in Crow, and during designated times of the day under the proposed program they will speak only Crow to the children.

"We know from studies

other tribes have done that within three months, the children really know full conversations," Pease said. "They're in the environment, they're there by context, they have the repetition and they are, after all, 3-year-olds. They're marvelous learners; they just soak it all up."

Parents who choose to have their children in the immersion program will have to enroll in the Crow language program at Little Big Horn College. And they will be expected to take part in family language activities throughout the entire year.

"They will have games that they play, songs that they sing and family-based activities," Pease said.

Real Bird will be one of the instructors in the parents' program. He teaches Plains Indian sign language, and his style of teaching uses what's called a total physical response model of language learning.

Growing up, he knew some rudimentary Plains Indian sign language because his grandmother, an uncle and a neighbor all were hard of hearing.

"When I was growing up, my dad would show me how these signs would work," Real Bird said. "The easiest one that I always knew is I would go to Grandma and ask for some money. And then 'yes' and 'no' and 'I'm hungry' and 'I'm full.'"

He attended a presentation in California on total physical response, and something clicked. The woman

who taught the class performed motions and actions in conjunction with speech.

"I realized that we have motions already in place and that was the signs," Real Bird said.

Plains Indian sign language is used by many tribes in the United States and Canada.

Real Bird has created materials that students can use outside the classroom, including flash cards and DVDs for home study and CDs for the car. He also developed a vocabulary of 400 words that he teaches along with the appropriate signs.

Real Bird doesn't focus on grammar and spelling. He emphasizes getting confident with the language and conversing with others.

"If somebody is just learning grammar and tense, they're not going to see the dynamics of the conversation," he said. "And the basis of the course is about communication, and that's why I try to keep it simple."

If students who learn how to communicate want to go on and learn the technical side of the language, he's all for it.

Real Bird said he tries to make his classroom safe for students who might be timid about speaking a language they are just learning. "We have to start at ground zero and assume these folks have no foundation in this, and we've got to treat them gentle and orient them in a nice way and make this a really good place to be," he said.

Spilyay classifieds

Tribal jobs

See Amelia Tewee in the personnel department to submit an application, or call 541-553-3262. View full descriptions and apply online at www.ctws.org. For jobs at Kah-Nee-Ta, go to kahneeta.com.

Compensation & Benefits Coordinator.

Perform diversified administrative duties to coordinate details of employee's benefits program. Salary Range \$29,077. Yr. Lupe Katchia 553-3498.

Forestry/Natural Resources: Restoration Crew Driver.

Working member of six person crew. Valid Oregon State Driver's License required. Salary Range \$10.50 Hr. Doug Dunlap 553-8205.

Forestry/Natural Resources: Restoration Crew Member.

Working member of six person crew. Will operate small powered equipment and hand tools while performing Natural Resources restoration projects. Salary Range \$10.00 Hr. Doug Dunlap 553-8205.

Community Health Nurse.

RN needed for Tribal Community Health Department to provide nursing services in clinic and community settings such as home, corrections, and daycare in addition to other settings as needed. Salary Range \$50,506. Yr. To \$55,393. Yr. Elizabeth Johnson 553-2460.

Community Health Nutritionist.

RD needed to assist with nutritional assessment, education, and planning in Tribal Community Health Department. Salary Range \$45,151. Yr. To \$48,339. Yr. Elizabeth Johnson/Linda Porter 553-2460.

Natural Resources Range & Ag. Restoration Crew Driver.

Working member of five or six member field crews. Will operate small powered equipment and hand tools while performing natural resources restoration projects in the Range and Ag. Department. Valid Oregon Driver's License required. TRIBAL MEMBER PREFERENCE. Salary Range \$10.50 Hr. Jason Smith 553-2011. Open Until Filled

Natural Resources Range & Ag. Restoration Crew Members.

Working member of five to six member field crews. Will operate small powered equipment and hand tools while performing natural resources restoration projects in the Range and Ag. Salary Range \$10.00 Hr. Jason Smith 553-2011.

Place for Kids Boys & Girls Club Program Coordinator Part Time.

Must have a High School diploma or equivalent. At least one year experience working with diverse youth 5 years of age and older. Ability to organize and implement daily activities for club members. Must like children! Provide appropriate and positive guidance/supervision for all youth

members. Motivate youth and encourage positive interactions. Salary Range \$9.00 Hr. June Smith 553-2323.

Police Officer.

High School Diploma or equivalent. Must pass DPSST academy within one year of hire. Must be 21 years of age. Possess a valid Oregon Driver's License. No bankruptcies. No felonies or Domestic Violence. No misdemeanor convictions within

one year. Salary Range \$29,675. Yr. To \$37,689. Yr. Lt. John Webb 553-2037.

Corrections Officers.

High School Diploma or equivalent. Salary Range \$25,235. Yr. To \$36,054. Yr. Lt. John Webb 553-3272.

Court Bailiff.

High School Diploma or equivalent. Salary Range \$25,000. Yr. To \$34,800. Yr. Lt. John Webb 553-3343.

CRITFC Staff Accountant

This position provides support to a broad range of accounting functions including contracts and travel coordination. Position also audits all travel by reconciling travel to approved rates for reimbursement. The position also tracks investment account performance on a monthly basis, and coordinates the development and approval process for all subcontracts. The position also helps with fixed asset inventory, prepares general ledger journal entries, assists in special project management, participates in internal and external audit, and works in other areas managed by the Department. Further information at critfc.org. Closing date for applications is August 17.

In the Tribal Court of the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs

CTWS, Petitioner, vs. MONICA WAHNETAH/DIAMOND TEWEE, Respondent; Case No. JV168-08. TO MONICA WAHNETAH. DIAMOND TEWEE:

YOU ARE HEREBY NOTIFIED that a Annual Assisted Guardianship Review has been filed with the Warm Springs Tribal Court. By this notice you are summoned to appear in this matter at a hearing scheduled for 16th day of August, 2012 @ 10:00 a.m., at the Warm Springs Tribal Court.

ARNETTA SALUDO, Petitioner, vs. CLINTON TOHET, Respondent; Case No. RO59-12. TO ARNETTA SALUDO / CLINTON TOHET:

YOU ARE HEREBY NOTIFIED that a RESTRAINING ORDER has been filed with the Warm Springs Tribal Court. By this notice you are summoned to appear in this matter at a hearing scheduled for 16th day of AUGUST 2012 @ 4:00 pm, at the Warm Springs Tribal Court.

CTWS, Petitioner, vs. Francis Spino Jr. / Susie Briseno-Thompson, Respondent; Case No. DO133/134-09.

TO Francis Spino Jr./Susie Briseno-Thompson:

YOU ARE HEREBY NOTIFIED that a SHOW CAUSE FAILURE TO PAY CHILD SUPPORT has been filed with the Warm Springs Tribal Court. By this notice you are summoned to appear in this matter at a hearing scheduled for 10th day of AUGUST, 2012 @ 9:00 a.m., at the Warm Springs Tribal Court.

Paulette Henry, Petitioner, vs. Hattie Hart/Vernon Sampson, Respondent; Case No. DO139-10. TO: Hattie Hart/Vernon Sampson/ Paulette Henry:

YOU ARE HEREBY NOTIFIED that a Modification has been filed with the Warm Springs Tribal Court. By this notice you are summoned to appear in this matter at a hearing scheduled for 9th day of August 2012 @ 10:00 am, at the Warm Springs Tribal Court.

SHOSHONAH GARCIA-NOSEY, Petitioner, vs. NICOLE GARCIA-SMITH, Respondent; Case No. DO107-12. TO: SHOSHONAH GARCIA-NOSEY/NICOLE GARCIA-SMITH:

YOU ARE HEREBY NOTIFIED that a NAME CHANGE has been filed with the Warm Springs Tribal Court. By this notice you are summoned to appear in this matter at a hearing scheduled for 15th day of August 2012 @ 11:00 am, at the Warm Springs Tribal Court.

CTWS, Petitioner, vs. Mary Ann Brito/Jayce Wallulatam Sr., Respondent; Case No. DO107-09. TO Mary Ann Brito / Jayce Wallulatam Sr.:

YOU ARE HEREBY NOTIFIED that a SHOW CAUSE FAILURE TO PAY CHILD SUPPORT has been filed with the Warm Springs Tribal Court. By this notice you are summoned to appear in this matter at a hearing scheduled for 9th day of AUGUST 2012 @ 3:00 pm, at the Warm Springs Tribal Court.

Norma Miller-Heath, Petitioner, vs. Natalia Oglby-Scott, Respondent; Case No. CV159-11. TO Norma Miller-Heath/Natalia Oglby-Scott:

YOU ARE HEREBY NOTIFIED that a Civil Complaint hearing has been scheduled with the Warm Springs Tribal Court. By

this notice you are summoned to appear in this matter at a hearing scheduled for the 22nd day of August, 2012 @ 10 a.m., at the Warm Springs Tribal Court.

CTWS, Petitioner, vs. KATIE SMITH, Respondent; Case No. DO98-09. TO KATIE SMITH:

YOU ARE HEREBY NOTIFIED that a REVIEW HEARING has been filed with the Warm Springs Tribal Court. By this notice you are summoned to appear in this matter at a hearing scheduled for 20th day of AUGUST, 2012 @ 10:00 a.m., at the Warm Springs Tribal Court.

CTWS, Petitioner, vs. WILMA SAUNDERS-BAZA / CALVIN WILLIAMS, Respondent; Case No. DO13-11. TO: WILMA SAUNDERS-BAZA / CALVIN WILLIAMS:

YOU ARE HEREBY NOTIFIED that a SHOW CAUSE FAILURE TO COMPLY has been filed with the Warm Springs Tribal Court. By this notice you are summoned to appear in this matter at a hearing scheduled for the 20th day of AUGUST 2012 @ 11:00 am, at the Warm Springs Tribal Court.