

## Regional employment stalls after improving

The employment recovery slowed dramatically in July across Central Oregon, following much stronger job growth in May and June. In Jefferson County, including Warm Springs:

The seasonally adjusted overall unemployment rate was 11.3 percent in July, down from 13.3 percent in June. The rate remains up significantly from before the Covid-19 crisis: It was 4.2 percent

in early March of this year.

Jefferson County's recovery stalled in July as the county added just 10 jobs on a seasonally adjusted basis, following a gain of more than 170 in June.

Seasonally adjusted total non-farm employment levels in Jefferson County dropped by 1,260 jobs during the peak of the covid crisis, and the county has only regained around 180 of those

jobs through July.

Employment levels remain down more than 16 percent from before the onset of the crisis. Similar to other communities, the hardest hit industry is leisure and hospitality with employment levels down 270 jobs from this time last year.

**Crook County:** The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate fell to 11.7 percent in July, down from 13.3 percent in June. The unem-

ployment rate is still much higher than before the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic; it was 4.8 percent in March 2020.

**Deschutes County:** The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate dropped to 10.8 percent in July, down from 12.4 percent in June. The rate remains significantly higher than before the Covid-19 crisis; it was just 3.3 percent in March 2020.

## IHS updates its covid testing data

The Indian Health Service has updated its coronavirus data, showing results across Indian country as of late last week.

According to the data: IHS has returned positive Covid-19 tests for 39,051 individuals. That represents an increase of 0.18 percent from the 38,982 cases previously reported.

Altogether, 613,175 coronavirus tests have been administered through late last week. That marks an increase of 0.33 percent from the day prior.

Since late July there has been a slowdown of coronavirus activity reported by the IHS.

Overall, almost 6.4 percent of IHS coronavirus tests have re-

turned positive, according to the data. But the rate is far higher in the Phoenix Area, where 15.8 percent are positive.

Next is the Navajo Area, which serves the largest reservation in the United States. But even with about 14.5 percent of tests returning positive, the rate has fallen steadily over the last month, following a noticeable decline as the region with the highest rate.

The Nashville Area, which covers a wide area of Indian Country, including the South and Northeastern parts of the U.S., also continues to show a high positive rate of almost 8.3 percent.

On the other end of the spectrum, aggressive efforts in the

Alaska Area are turning up very few cases. Out of 126,292 tests administered in Alaska, only 0.76 percent have returned positive, the data shows.

The Alaska Area also outnumbers every other area—including Navajo—in terms of tests administered. The Oklahoma City Area has fallen back to the second spot.

The data, however, is incomplete. While 100 percent of facilities run directly by the IHS are reporting data, only 33 percent of tribally managed facilities and 44 percent of urban Indian organizations are doing the same.

The service population of IHS overall is 2,562,290 individuals.

Based on that figure, 23.9 percent of American Indians and Alaska Natives have been tested for the coronavirus since the IHS began reporting data in March.

The IHS user population, on the other hand, is a much smaller number. As of 2019, 1,662,834 American Indians and Alaska Natives have lived within a service delivery area and have received health care at an IHS or tribal facility during the previous three years.

Based on the user population, almost 36.9 percent of Native Americans have been tested for the coronavirus since the IHS began reporting data in March.

### Around Indian Country

## At 90 speaker preserving the language

When Virginia Beavert received her Ph.D. in linguistics at the age of 90, it was the culmination of almost eight decades of work preserving the Ichishkiin language.

A member of the Yakama Nation, she started doing language documentation at the age of 12.

At that time she served as an interpreter and transcriber for researchers studying languages of the Pacific Northwest's indigenous groups.

As an adult, Ms. Beavert worked on the first-ever Ichishkiin dictionary, recorded Yakama myths, and contributed to grammars and word lists of her mother tongue.

Earlier this summer, when she addressed fellow language activists from around the world via Zoom at a conference, she struck a determined tone. "I want to let you know that we are here," she said to the camera at one point, "and we are supportive."

As is the case for so many during the pandemic, language activists, linguists, and others who work on revitalization campaigns are reimagining their work at a time when coronavirus has made in-person meetings impossible.

It's a transition that has taken on particular urgency given the fact that the speaker pool for the



Virginia Beavert

world's threatened and endangered languages skews older—precisely the population most at risk from the pandemic. This problem is compounded by the fact that indigenous communities not just in the United States but around the world are disproportionately affected both by the virus and by the economic toll of the shutdown.

Against this backdrop, the push to keep language revitalization going under lockdown is a symbol of cultural resilience—and, for many, an opportunity to build national and international solidarity among indigenous peoples around the world.

Many indigenous groups in the United States have long had provisions for distance learning. This is particularly the case for reservations that are "checkerboards," with plots owned by native and non-native people intermingled, the legacy of 19th-century policies aimed at forcing assimilation by carving up communally owned land into private allotments.

In some places, however, persistent connectivity issues make

transitioning to online revitalization work a challenge. Despite calls from indigenous communities to address disparities, the FCC estimated in 2018 that 35 percent of tribal land residents still don't have broadband access.

In spite of these obstacles, a number of language revitalization professionals report that their projects are not just continuing under quarantine—they're expanding.

### Attention W.S. small business owners

If your company did not receive Paycheck Protection Program, or Economic Injury Disaster Loan funding—or any other type of federal or state Covid-19 relief assistance—you may be eligible for grant awards that are being made available locally in Jefferson, Crook and Deschutes counties. Sole Proprietors are being encouraged to apply.

The Central Oregon Intergovernmental Council and a host of regional partners have successfully

awarded just over \$400,000 in grants to small businesses throughout Central Oregon since July.

With approximately \$250,000 still available, COIC is re-opening the application on a first-come, first-serve basis. Small businesses and non-profits located anywhere in the tri-county region are encouraged to apply by visiting [coic.org/grant](http://coic.org/grant).

Or contact COIC at 541-383-7290. Or email: [sbdc@coic.edu](mailto:sbdc@coic.edu)

### W.S. Credit hours, safety

The Warm Springs Tribal Credit Enterprise is a mask zone upon entry at all times. Other safety measures at Credit:

The ATM lobby is open to one person at a time. Cash checks and make loan payments at the drive-through window. Turn in loans and pick up loans at the drive-through.

The hours at Credit are Monday through Friday 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., closed from noon to 1 p.m.

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