

# A Year in Review ~ 2020 ~

The following are some of the memorable news events during 2020 on the reservation.

## January

The year 2020 began with the Warm Springs Complete Count Committee planning for the 2020 U.S. Census.

The goal of the Warm Springs 2020 Census organizers is to get an accurate count of the people living on the reservation. The Census determines the allocation of close to \$700 billion in federal funds—distribution based on the population of the particular place.

According to one estimate: For each person not counted who should be counted, some \$3,000 in federal support for services is lost. And reservations see an average estimated undercount of almost 5 percent.

According to a report released last week: Native Americans are the most undercounted group on the U.S. Census. Census Day 2020 is April 1, and the count is scheduled to run into mid summer.

January 2020 at the Museum at Warm Springs brought the Twenty-Seventh Annual Youth Art Exhibit. “Each year we celebrate the creativity and talents of our tribal youth,” said Natalie Kirk, museum curator and exhibits coordinator.

About the upcoming show, which opened January 23, Ms. Kirk says, “Discover masterpieces created by the hearts of our youth of Warm Springs, and see first-hand how art can positively affect our community and young minds. The exhibition will cherish the vibrant creativity unlocked by local tribal youth.”

The team working on the state Missing and Murdered Indigenous People initiative met with the Warm Springs tribal community in January. The state legislature in 2019 created with the MMIP task force, providing resources to help address one of the most serious problems among tribes. Terri Davie of the Oregon State Police is leading the team.

She and Mitch Sparks, of the Oregon Legislative Commission on Indian Services, met with Tribal Council, and then the tribal community, hearing ideas on how to improve public safety response to the MMIP crisis.

Power and Water applied for a \$200,000 grant to assess the potential of groundwater resources on tribal land. Results of the study could help determine the potential use of groundwater for domestic service, or a commercial potential such as a water bottling business.

The domestic water source for much of the reservation currently is the Deschutes River. Water is drawn from the river at the treatment plant in the Dry Creek area.

The use of treated surface water as the source of domestic drinking water is common, especially for larger communities. Groundwater, though, has advantages: Filtration through the earth helps clean the groundwater.

The work is rewarding—challenging for sure, and for this reason rewarding. Starla Green has a lifetime of cooking experience—from a longhouse helper as a child, to her successful commercial food business.

Starla joined the Warm Springs Community Action Team last fall, working now as the WSCAT Food



Charisse Heath and friends in January invite contestants to compete at the 2020 Miss Warm Springs Pageant.

Cart manager and trainer. The food cart—the Twisted Teepee—is by the Action Team office on campus. For now Starla opens for lunch Wednesdays through Fridays.

During the first month of the new year Tribal Council met with its committees—Fish and Wildlife, both On- and Off-Reservation; Timber, Health and Welfare, Land Use, Range and Ag, during this week. Council review then continued with Human Resources, Finance, Governmental Affairs, Managed Care, Administrative Services and Procurement. Branches were up next—Tribal Court and Public Safety, Natural Resources, Health and Human Services, Education and Utilities.

January also saw the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians 2020 winter convention.

The tribal vehicle closed some time ago, due to various factors, and the building now stands empty at the industrial park. The vehicle pool and its equipment could be put to use as an automotive school, said Valerie Switzler, general manager of the tribal Education Branch. Ms. Switzler reviewed the progress of this project in January at Tribal Council. A funding source for an automotive school is Career Technical Education, CTE; in partnership with the Warm Springs office of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, WOIA—Workforce Development.

## February

Timber practices on the reservation have changed greatly over the recent decades. The 2020 Willow Summit timber sale is a good example.

Natural Resources and Forestry reviewed the sale in February with Tribal Council. Some of their discussion illustrates how the forestry practices have changed, specifically how the allowable cut has by necessity been reduced.

The Willow Summit sale will

be in the northwest area of the reservation, by Willow Springs and Summit Butte, the features that give their names to the sale.

The sale will involve about 26.5 million board feet of timber, with revenue going to the tribes’ general fund, including areas such as the Senior Pension, funded through such projects.

Forestry and Natural Resources began looking at the aspects of this sale back in 2018. The inter-disciplinary team developed a target area of about 17,000 acres from which to develop the sale. Trees in the area are from plantings of decades ago, now coming within the harvestable inventory.

Over the past two years the team has developed a plan for mitigation of impacts to huckleberries, wildlife and fisheries, fire, etc.

Some of the discussion with Council showed how the reservation timber practice has seen a dramatic change: Most obviously, the 26.5 million board feet is within the sustainable level as determined by Natural Resources, Forestry and the committee. Sustainability means the harvest of timber is below the amount of the forest growth.

The Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs this month was chosen to host and conduct the first 2020 census count for the entire state of Oregon.

As with other rural areas, and reservations in particular, Warm Springs contends with being under-represented during census counts.

To help address this problem, the U.S. Census Bureau for the Western region contacted the tribes earlier this month. Julie Lam, census regional director, based in Los Angeles, wrote to the tribes: “We value our partnership with the tribe, and are committed to a complete and accurate count of our nation’s first peoples,” Ms. Lam said in a letter to Council Chairman Raymond Tsumpti.

The tribes and regional Census Center are now planning an event for Thursday, March 12.

New funding will become available for the 2020-21 school year at the Warm Springs Academy.

The funding, available after July 1, will create new staff and teacher positions, helping continue student improvement, said Ken Parshall, school district superintendent.

Student success at the Academy has seen great improvement, especially over the past few years; “and we’re planning additional investments at the K through 8,” Mr. Parshall said.

An aspect of the new programs will be addressing gaps that a student may have in math or literacy from a previous grade.

Warm Springs Geo Visions is a semi-finalist in Honoring Nations 2020, an award recognition given only to the most deserving of tribal enterprises across the country.

Honoring Nations is an award of the Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development, and the Native Nations Institute of the University of Arizona.

(Review continues on page 5)



The Confederated Tribes and the Simnasho community in February 2020 hosted the Forty-Third Annual Lincoln’s Powwow. This image was captured on Saturday at the powwow by Jayson Smith.

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