

A Year in Review ~ 2020 ~

(Continued from December 2)

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

April

In April, despite the Covid-19 pandemic, the Celilo Village decided to hold the **First Salmon Feast**, while limiting attendance in order to reduce the public health risk. Several people who attended the feast on April 13 later tested positive for Covid-19, including Celilo Village leader Bobby Begay; although it was not confirmed that any of these people had contracted the virus at the longhouse event.

Less than two weeks later, however, Mr. Begay, 51, died from complications due to the virus. A leading fish technician for the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission, Bobby had a reputation as an effective advocate for cultural and environmental protection. Friends and colleagues described him as a force of nature: upbeat, welcoming, and keen to build bridges between Native American communities and outsiders.

The tragedy of this year's feast brings into focus the terrible choices tribal communities everywhere are now facing. On the one hand, canceling events may save lives, and is necessary in the fight a pandemic that has already devastated lives and livelihoods across the world. Yet for many Native American communities, such gatherings are critical; they reinforce a sense of cohesion and identity.

May

Like all graduating classes, the **Class of 2020** is unique, though the graduation ceremony this year will be especially memorable.

The seniors at Madras High School and Bridges who have met all requirements will graduate on time, in June, as is the custom.

This spring there had been some question as to how the graduation ceremony could happen while keeping everyone safe from the virus.

To address the question, the school district asked the seniors and families about what they would like to see for the graduation ceremony.

The district received nearly 200 responses; and these ideas will be incorporated into the ceremony.

Graduation Day will be Saturday, June 13 at the high school. Details are still being worked out; though for sure each student will get to walk across the stage to receive his or her diploma.

Tribal member and leader

Ken Smith passed away on Wednesday, May 13 at his home in Warm Springs. He was 85.

Mr. Smith was born in The Dalles on March 30, 1935, into a poor family. He would grow up to be one of the most important leaders of the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs. Ken had a charisma that brought others to him throughout his lifetime.

The Tribal Council endorsed the hiring of a new **BIA superintendent** for the Warm Springs Agency. The presentation of the hiring recommendation was at Council this month, via teleconference with BIA regional director Bryan Mercier.

Council and Mr. Mercier had earlier interviewed two finalist candidates for the position, and came to a unanimous decision on the hiring. The new Warm Springs Agency

superintendent will likely arrive in two months, Mercier said, as the background and other requirements are met.

Tribal Council in May voted to cancel the **2020 Pi-Ume-Sha Powwow** and related Treaty Days community events like the rodeo, parade, health fair and run.

Council made the decision based on the recommendation of the tribes' Covid-19 Response Team.

Pi-Ume-Sha usually happens in late June. The powwow annually brings hundreds of visitors to the reservation: The potential for visitors bringing the coronavirus to the reservation was the factor in the Council decision.

June

The Confederated Tribes and **Indian Head Gaming** decided to reopen in the casino in mid June. "We are very excited to open and with the amount of phone calls we receive on a daily basis from our guests, we know they are looking forward to our opening too," said Belinda Chavez, Director of Marketing for Indian Head Gaming. "We are committed to following the Centers for Disease Control's guidelines, and we have implemented safety and sanitation measures in addition to limiting our occupancy to 250 total guests," said Chavez.

Tribal Council voted 5-4 to begin the **reopening of the tribal organization** on June 8. That week will be the first phase of the four-phase re-opening, with 25-percent of employees returning over each successive week.

The Covid-19 Response team had recommended a delay of one more week, to June 15. A majority of the Council members, though, felt it is time on June 8 to begin the reopening. As the employees return there will be new precautions such as more cleaning supplies and hand sanitizers, thermometers, plexi-glass windows when appropriate, and in time additional precautions.

The Warm Springs Community Action team has activated a Souce hydro-panel array to provide a **renewable supply of clean drinking water** for the community. The Community

Action Team contracted with Zero Mass Water to install the panels.

Source hydropanels look like solar panels; instead of energy, though, the panels produce clean drinking water.

The panels make the water using only sunlight and air. This renewable method is opposed to traditional systems that filter ground water; or treat surface water.

Th hydro-panel form of water production is sustainable, while also removing the need for heavy chemicals used in drinking water filtration.

The ten hydropanels are located on the west side of the Community Action Team office. The panels will produce up to 50 liters of drinkable water a day, said Carina Miller, Action Team researcher.

The Agency area is on a **boil water notice**: Extreme water conservation measures should be taken throughout the area served by the Warm Springs system; and the Schoolie Flat system.

"We're at a very critical point, where conservation efforts need to be followed by all community members," said Travis Wells, director of Public Utilities.

It has been noted that community members are misusing water to fill swimming pools, and water lawns for extended periods of time. "Until we can do the required repairs, folks will need to utilize water only for personal use—flushing toilets, showering, boiling for consumption." This summer's boil water requirement is similar to that of last year, which the community endured for several months.

Tribal Council has adopted a program to provide **Cares Act financial grants** to tribal members who are suffering personal economic and health hardships due to the Covid-19 public health emergency. Tribal management is setting up the program, and is expecting to begin taking applications and issuing grants to qualified tribal members this month.

There was a time when life on the reservation was less complicated—Never easy, just not so complicated like today. If you visit the new exhibit at the Museum at Warm Springs, you can see firsthand some Native works from many decades ago, in some cases from more than a century ago.

The exhibition is called **The Path of Resilience**, on display through the summer. Featured items include woven bags from the

early part of the last century, plus beaded objects, a review of the Treaty of 1855, and more. All of the works are from the museum's Permanent Collection and Archives Department.

With its re-opening this month the museum is taking precautions to ensure the safety of staff and visitors.

July

Students of the Jefferson County 509-J School District have not been in a classroom since March, when the schools closed because of the virus. Three and a half months later—and with the virus still very much among us—the district is now **planning for the 2020-21 school year**.

On the statewide level the Oregon Department of Education, Oregon Health Authority and Governor Brown have developed guidelines, called 'Ready Schools, Safe Learners—Guidance for School Year 2020-21.' The state guidelines provide a model for on-

site classes, and the 509-J district is planning to implement this model for all the district schools—including the Warm Springs Academy—in the fall of 2020.

Yvonne Greene and ChaCha Ramirez of Warm Springs have been asked to **represent the Pacific Northwest** basketball team at an international basketball tournament planned for next summer in the Dominican Republic.

As of this month since the outbreak, the Warm Springs Health and Wellness Center has conducted more than 1,850 **Covid-19 tests**. Approximately 1,645 tested negative, with some tests still pending.

On the reservation so far there have been at least 165 positive test results. In Jefferson County overall, there have about 270 positive Covid-19 results.

On the reservation 16 tribal members have been hospitalized, and six discharged. Very sadly, there have been at least three deaths in the community directly attributed to the virus. The number of positives on-reservation has been increasing this month, with more members requiring hospitalization.

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The Madras High School Class of 2020 held their graduation ceremony in June. This was a unique graduation, as only one student was allowed on stage at a time to receive the diploma.



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