

Letters to the editor

Equitable representation

If you have questions or concerns about what is transpiring from a letter to the editor in the Madras Pioneer do reach out. Our goal remains the same and even more so after what we are feeling from that letter: Equitable representation is critical to a student body who is made up of 71 percent BIPOC (Latinx and Native American) students and their families in our school district. To address the letter is to give it power. We choose education. We choose transparency. We choose equity. We choose factual information.

Our school district receives federal funding called Impact Aid in lieu of taxes on behalf of Warm Springs Reservation residents and students.

This school year 2020-21, 509-J school district received \$2,858,000 on behalf of our Native students. For the school year 2019-20 the district received \$3,045,327. I can continue but these numbers are the average amount our school receives every year in lieu of taxes.

This number does not include the Title VI funding (specific to Native American students), or the many grants the district receives based on the data from our Warm Springs students' opportunity gaps they experience resulting from generations of trauma stemming from boarding schools and assimilation policies and practices.

I would also like to acknowledge the district receives such funding due to the fact that Tribal people were forced onto reservations by the government. Why? Because of land: Land that anyone in this country gets to call home. Land our ancestors roamed, lived off of and took care of since time immemorial.

The positions we are running for have a responsibility to the people they serve. This responsibility includes clear communication and transparency on the funding, being a voice for the students and families and ensuring the safety of our children.

I hope the school board members as well as the candidates who are running as our opposition address the misconception in this letter. I hope they do not condone these types of attacks on their constituents and families they claim to serve.

Each school district candidate has children in the district and I can say as a par-

ent in the community I do not feel safe with this attack on our community.

If you have concerns please reach out. If you want to know how to support the slate of candidates you can do so by sharing our social media, helping spread the word with your family and friends, sign up to text and phonebank and most importantly showing up to vote by May 18!

Thank you to all those who continue to support and show up for us. It is very much appreciated.

Jaylyn Suppah
#representationmatters

Advocate for children

Hello,

I am Lorien Stacona and I am running for 509-J School Board, Seat #2. I am running for school board not because I want to, but because I feel like I need to. The current school board lacks one very key element: Communication.

Communication has two key components, sharing and listening, and I do not believe the current school board does either very well.

I have advocated for equality, for our children to have the same programs and opportunities offered to those in Madras. I put my concerns up through the chain of command all the way to the school board a number of times and just felt dismissed every time.

As a parent advocate I am well aware of the issues our families and school staff are constantly dealing with just by listening and being a part of this community. Some of those key issues include bullying, support programs and staff communication.

I have two children that attend the Warm Springs K8 Academy: My cultural loving eighth-grader Kiahna and my competitive athlete Kiellan. I also have one year old Branson. I know my children will be okay because I will always hold them accountable and show up to advocate for them. However, through my role as a case manager and involved community member, I know every child does not have a person who will show up and advocate for them.

We need someone on the school board that knows our community and our struggles and is ready to address those issues on day one.

Anybody that knows me knows that I am not afraid

to have difficult conversations. I am not a "typical" politician, I am not afraid to hurt someone's feelings, in order to fight for all of our kids.

I am now asking for your support so I can be the change. I can promise that I will speak up for every child to have equitable opportunities. I will bring change and I will not dodge difficult or sensitive conversations and issues.

In order for our children to thrive, their teachers and staff need better support. As parents in this community, communication needs to happen and not just through a survey. Staff and parents need follow through when they give feedback. We need brave voices to ensure all of the right issues are addressed.

There are people in our school district that are hoping that you don't show up. They are depending on it. I encourage you to vote and encourage you to advocate for your family and friends to show up to vote for our kids.

A vote for Lorien is a vote for your kids.

Lorien Stacona

For all learners

Dear Jefferson County 509-J School District community,

I am running for a second term on the Jefferson County 509-J School Board to continue advocating for the best educational opportunities for all learners.

My work as a board member centers on serving all of the children in the community. As a board member, I have numerous goals for moving forward.

1. Support the transition of our new superintendent. Help him build relationships in the community to gain a deep understanding of the dynamics within our district.

Connect him to the current work and goals for the district and then build upon that foundation.

2. Support staff, students and families as we recover from impacts of the pandemic. Gain a deep understanding of student needs, and support those needs through 509-J programs.

3. Allocate resources and work with outside organizations to ensure students are healthy, physically and emotionally. Even before the pandemic, this work was important.

4. Expand community partnerships and explore alternative resources so we can sustainably add more culturally-relevant and career-ready learning opportunities for our students.

5. Proactively build partnerships with the community and families to increase engagement. Continue work to expand upon engagement events and virtual platforms. Our students will be most successful when they have support from the staff, family and community around them. Gathering input from the community will help drive district work.

As a school board member, I know my responsibilities as an incumbent. I have had four years to become a leader for all students. During that time, I have been part of a team that has participated in numerous board

trainings, implemented a plan for continual policy updates, and developed superintendent and board evaluations to make sure the lens on our work is continual.

The challenges are always growing and I want to reinvest my four years of experience in another term of service. I humbly ask for your support when you mark your ballot

Thank you for your support,

Jamie Hurd, Jefferson County School Board Member, Position 2.

Representation matters

Two-thirds of the student population in the Jefferson County School District is BIPOC—Black, Indigenous and People of Color. Yet, there is only one person of color on the Jefferson County School District board, and none on the Education Service District board.

Those reading this might say, "All that matters is that they care about the students." As an educator myself, caring about the students is important, but also understanding that for BIPOC students their lived experience has been different than mine. That is why it's important to have equitable representation on our education boards.

When we elect people of color to represent our students of color, they are better able to understand the needs of those students because they are from the same communities. That's why I was appalled at a recent letter to the editor in the Madras Pioneer that targeted Warm Springs candidates.

The author's message was that if you don't pay property taxes, you shouldn't run for office. This is highly offensive, exclusionary, racist and downright incorrect.

While the author's clear target was Warm Springs residents who do not pay county or state taxes because they live on a federal reserve, I'm curious if the author would extend this thinking to white citizens of Jefferson County? The conclusion of this kind of thinking is that anyone who is not a property owner, such as renters, should not be allowed to run for office in the county in which they reside.

According to citydata.com, at least 29 percent of Jefferson County residents are renters. How many other people in our community believe that one-third of our residents do not deserve to run for county offices? That two-thirds of our students don't deserve representation from someone that looks like them?

The fact is, in order to run for county offices, you must be a U.S. citizen, a resident of the county, fill out the appropriate paperwork and pay a small candidate fee.

To suggest that one must own property to run for office has racist roots. Historically, only white men were allowed to own property and therefore be allowed to vote or hold office.

Fortunately, our nation has progressed from there to allow all U.S. citizens the ability to vote and hold office.

Unfortunately, there is still much work to be done, as is evidenced by the remarks of

the aforementioned letter to the editor.

Think you're not racist? If you believe that our Native population does not deserve representation, you are upholding the structures of systemic racism. If you believe our Latino population—who are largely renters—does not deserve representation, you are upholding the structures of systemic racism.

Stop calling yourself colorblind and see that inequities exist in our own community. Until you are ready to be anti-racist and support the leadership of people of color, until you are able to recognize the racial stereotypes you believe about our neighbors, you will continue to perpetuate the racism our nation needs to shed.

Heidi Casper, Warm Springs.

Regarding the letter

There was a letter to the editor in the Madras Pioneer on April 28 that got my blood boiling. Several pot shots were taken at the Warm Springs community and twisted incorrect information and stereotypes. It is up to all of us to reject these and educate ourselves with facts.

Our 509-J schools have many funding resources and while the county property taxes support our schools at 15 percent, they are not the majority of our financial resources which come from the state, federal government and grants.

Impact Aid is received specifically to support school districts where land has been removed from the local tax rolls by the federal government, including tribal lands. The 509-J school district receives more than \$2 million every year through this program.

There are additional Title VI funds that are specifically to support additional staff such as music, language, and similar as determined by the community.

The Warm Springs Academy is the only partnership of its type in the nation where it is funded in half by the residents of the Warm Springs community and a neighboring community.

They created this partnership by getting a loan and basically paying for 50 percent of the K-8 Academy to be built.

We should be proud of this impressive partnership that supports the students in the Warm Springs communities.

The letter to the editor I reference at the top was sent out by the spouse of someone running against a tribal member.

That is what it was about, trying to persuade people to vote for her husband by putting the community of her husband's opponent down.

That's terrible and uncalled for. Tell us why you want us to vote for your husband and leave the personal and prejudiced attacks towards the Warm Springs community out of it.

Kim Schmith, Jefferson County resident.

To Family and Friends

It's been almost one year, May 17, 2020, since my little brother's home burned. Air Life took him to the Burn Center in Portland. He was on a machine for 18 days, off machine June 3, just the machine was working. My heart is so, so broken. Only me left from 11 children born to Tom and Sadie Brown, Lamont has two sons, one granddaughter, many grandchildren with Patricia Johns Brown.

Planning the Memorial, no momentum yet. I was so lucky for my children and extended family, who helped me with the funeral. Thank you Sam Starr and Txlee Winch for going to pick up my brother. The wonderful dressing: Thank you Levi and Pearl Van Pelt for being with me when he was taken off the machine. And also for the help with our Traditional ceremony. The girls, Sandy Dave, Carol Lawrence, Terry Saldudo—Ladonna Squiemphen for the money help when we had to be in Portland. Thank you Marella Van Pelt for feeding us, Prayers you all could be with us.

On June 12, wherever—the Pavilion or Wolfman Suppah's home—Prayers the longhouse be open. James Sam for the wonderful work on his buckskin outfit. Will be giving Indian names (12), Tony Van Pelt's four children, Wolfman Suppah's three children, Eliza Medrano's four children, Curtis Brown granddaughter, Leonard and Ashley's daughter. Anyone else, Let me know. We'll start opening Memorial at 8 a.m., Lunch, then naming.

Much blessing to Wilson and Lucille for all the work and progress. Thank you Mushy for your work. Been a hard year for me, I lost my sister in December. When I drive down the road I look for my brother. Both sister and brother loved the casino. Lamont was a praying man, blessed our table at Senior Lunch, traveled with us ladies for Senior Days.

Hoping will see you at the Memorial. Thanks,

Eliza Brown Jim and Family, Levi and Pearl, Chet Jr. and Family, Anthony Van Pelt and Family, Wolfman and Children, Lillie Van Pelt, Marella Sam and Family, Tony Van Pelt and Family, Leonard Bryan and Family, Marella Van Pelt, and Eliza and Rego and Family.

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