

Students speaking Native at Madras High School

Language teacher Dallas Winishut is soft-spoken, but his words carry the weight of generations. His Madras High School students pick them up eagerly, conscious that they also now safeguard the flickering flame of the Warm Springs Tribe's language.

The Jefferson County School District has added this school year four periods of Ichishkin, the Warm Springs' language.

The district is partnering with the tribal government to help Native students succeed in school, with tangible results. The statewide American Indian/Alaska Native graduation rate was 67 percent in 2021, while in Jefferson County the rate was nearly 80 percent, just shy of its rate for all students. Expanding its Native language class offerings is just one way the district helps ensure that all students feel welcome in school.

Madras High reworked its schedule to open one period of Ichishkin in January. It was so popular that the high school opened four periods this year.

The language class motivates students such as senior



Language teacher Dallas Winishut at MHS class.

Gunner Herkshan to come to school each day and finish out this year. He said life on the reservation can leave people feeling isolated, and learning his people's languages helps solidify bonds.

He has been teaching himself Kiksht, the Wasco's language. He is thrilled to take a class to learn Ichishkin.

The district's Warm Springs K-8 Academy offers Ichishkin, Kiksht and Numu. The district wants to offer all three at the high school, too, but it's hard to find teachers.

The Warm Springs reservation has only about 16 people who speak Ichishkin fluently, four who speak Numu and three who speak Kiksht, according to Valerie Switzler, general manager for

the tribes' Education Branch.

Ms. Switzler said the high school had Native language classes in the past, but a lack of resources and the loss of elders had disrupted them. The district and the tribal government then worked closely to get grants. The district also uses some of its own money to pay for the teachers, who are contracted through the tribal government.

Ms. Switzler said students understand their culture better if they understand the foundational language. Maintaining their culture and history is key to protecting the tribes' sovereignty, she said.

Tribal elders have told

her: "Don't let our languages die. It's part of who we are." She welcomes the non-Native students who are also taking the classes, which include lessons about food, song and family relationships.

"It gives a better understanding of who we are, our thought processes and what we hold dear," Valerie said. "One day they might be that legislator or a person who has influence on a school board."

Kevin Richards, school board chair, said the classes are part of the emphasis on celebrating diversity.

At the Warm Spings Acadmey, Principal Lonnie Henderson reworked his school's schedule to make sure students could have enough time to make meaningful progress in the elective language classes.

Even at a young age, the students understand the power of these classes. Sixth grader Bethaliss Smith said she needs to learn her language so she can be a better member of her tribe. Sixth grader River Edwards said it feels "more traditional" to talk to family in Ichishkin.

Middle school students learn enough to understand and read some but not



Madras High senior Hayden Heath said one of his favorite parts of the Ichishkin language classes is learning the names of common things such as animals, colors and days of the week in his family's language.



Students attend a new Ichishkin language class.

enough to initiate conversation. With the high school classes, the district aims to lift students to the conversational level so they can earn the Oregon Seal of Biliteracy. The seal recognizes students who have achieved a high level of profi-

ciency in a language in addition to English. In 2020, the first students earned the seal in a Native language.

Story and photos by Jake Arnold, Oregon School Board Association.

Highway 3 Improvement work



D.McMechan/Spilya

Warm Springs Construction and paving crews have been working on a major part of the Highway 3 improvement project. The work last week involved paving along a stretch of the highway from Upper Dry Creek to Highway 26. This adds to the other parts of the overall project, including the sidewalk, curbs, storm water drainage and street lights.



Summaries of Tribal Council

The following are summaries of Tribal Council during the month of September:

September 6, 2022

The meeting was called to order at 9:09 by Chairman Jonathan Smith Sr. Roll call: Chief Delvis Heath, Chief Joseph Moses, James 'Jim' Manion, Alvis Smith, III, Lincoln Jay Suppah, Wilson Wewa Jr., Carlos Calica, Rosa Graybael, Vice Chairman Raymond 'Captain' Moody, Minnie Yahtin, Recorder.

• Covid update with Hyllis Dauphinais, Clinic director; Danny Martinez, Emergency Management; and Katie Russell, Community Health:

The Team will update the protocol then return with a recommendation.

• Indian Health Service update with Hyllis

Dauphinais.

• Federal and state legislative update calls.

• Tribal attorneys update. Executive Session from 2:32 to 3:30 p.m.

Motion by Captain approving the Chairman to sign the letter to Richard Whitman, Office of Environmental Equality, with edits. Second by Carlos. Question; Jim/yes, Joe/yes, Captain/yes, Jay/yes, Rosa/yes, Carlos/yes, Alvis/yes, 7/0/0, Chairman not voting. Motion carried.

• Tribal attorney update Executive session from 3:40 to 4:30 p.m.

With no further discussion the meeting adjourned at 4:30 p.m.

September 12

The meeting was called to order by Vice Chairman

Raymond 'Captain' Moody. Roll call: Chief Delvis Heath, James 'Jim' Manion, Alvis Smith III, Wilson Wewa Jr., Chief Joseph Moses, Rosa Graybael. Minnie Yahtin, Recorder.

• Budget overview with Secretary-Treasurer Robert Brunoe and Isaac George, Finance.

• 2023 budget presentations:

Secretary-Treasurer; and Health and Human Services. • Call back for discussion on capital.

• Public Safety. Call back for discussion on Parole and Probation.

• Warm Springs Economic Development and business units

• Oregon Department of Environmental Equality consultation.

With no further discussion the meeting adjourned at 5:15 p.m.

Indigenous Peoples Day October 10

Indigenous Peoples Day this year will be next Monday, October 10.

Indigenous Peoples Day in Oregon falls on the second Monday of October, which formerly would have been Columbus Day.

The Oregon legislature and governor approved the change in the holiday designation last year, so this is the state's Second Annual Indigenous Peoples Day.

On that day all non-essential federal offices in the state will be closed.

In Oregon there are about 130,000 people who identify as full- or part American Indian or Alaska Native, according to the most recent U.S. Census data. The 130,000 individuals represents 3.1 percent of the overall state population.

January 13

The meeting was called to order by Vice Chairman Raymond 'Captain' Moody. Roll call: Alvis Smith III, James 'Jim' Manion, Chief Joseph Moses, Wilson Wewa Jr., Carlos Calica, Rosa Graybael. Minnie Yahtin, Recorder.

• 2023 Budget Presentations:

Natural Resources. Education. Human Resources. Governmental Affairs. Call back for updated budget sheets. Finance. Call back for Administrative Services packets.

Motion by Carlos to adjourn at 3:10 p.m.

September 15

The meeting was called to order by Vice Chairman Raymond 'Captain' Moody. Roll call: James 'Jim' Manion, Lincoln Jay Suppah, Wilson Wewa Jr., Carlos Calica, Rosa Graybael. Minnie Yahtin, Recorder.

SUMMARIES continue on 7

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NIEA COMMUNITY

REPORT BACK

Tuesday October 11th
5:30 - Dinner
6pm-7:30pm - Presentations

Location: TBD

Our team invites you to our community report back appreciation dinner & presentations from our travels to the National Indian Education Association (NIEA) Conference in Oklahoma. Students & staff will briefly share about their experience and what they learned while attending.




Madras Possibilities Thrift Store

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