



# Spilyay Tymoo

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## District report as new school year starts soon

An important question in a recent survey among students of the Jefferson County 509-J School District asks, 'Do you feel like an important part of your school's community?' Reading the answers, as considered by race-ethnicity, the Native American students of the district have the most positive responses.

Another survey question asks, 'Do you enjoy school most of the time?' Again, the Native students have the most positive responses—all good news from the recent 509-J Performance Indicators Dashboard student survey.

"The personal and human connection is a big reason why students feel like they belong," said Jay Mathison, 509-J district superintendent. At the Warm Springs Academy, for instance, "Having Culture and Heritage there can make the students feel more at home."

And clearly, feeling good about being at school is one of the keys to improving attendance. Tribal Council met with the superintendent, the 509-J board and Warm Springs Academy principal for discussion as the new school year is soon beginning.

### The performance numbers

First of all and very noticeably: The 2022-23 school district Performance Indicators Dashboard data still reflects the impact of the covid.

The pandemic abruptly interrupted the 2019-2020 school year, for which attendance numbers do

not apply.

And the data for the following three school years, through 2022-23, shows the lingering impact of the early 2020 shutdown.

An example is the overall regular attendance rate for Jefferson County School District among students in kindergarten through the second grade, very formative years that can have long-term or permanent results.

Warm Springs Academy Principal Lonnie Henderson explained that some years ago, grades k-2 were more recreation-oriented for the students. This has changed, and k-2 are now education-oriented; so a student who is absent, even during these early grades, loses important learning time.

For k-2 students of the district, before the pandemic, the 'regular attender rate'—meaning no more than 12 absences during the year—was at 72 percent.

When in-school classes for the most part resumed in 2020-21, the regular attender rate had fallen to 57 percent; then dropped again the following school year to 43 percent; followed by improvement last year to 52 percent—still an overall k-2 student attendance loss of 20-percent from pre-covid years.

This is a serious issue—for 509-J and nationwide—because attendance is among the most important factors in whether a student will graduate and move on, Mr. Mathison said.

See Schools on 5

## Classroom construction at the Academy



D. McMechan/Spilyay

Construction crews this summer are working on the addition to the Warm Springs Academy. The work will last through the fall and early winter, as the construction completion date is in the spring. The project will add six new early-learning classrooms.

The plan at this point foresees the completion date in the spring of 2024, said Jay Mathison, district superintendent.

The project—part of the \$24 million district bond levy of 2021—is also adding an additional parking lot at the school.

The Academy construction has a budget of about \$4 million.

The Confederated Tribes and school district built the Academy cooperatively in 2013-14, after the membership voted 3-1 in favor of the school. The tribes and 509-J then shared equally the \$10.7 million construction cost.

The Academy was originally built to accommodate up to 750 students. It was apparent soon after that more space would be needed for classrooms, as some areas had to be temporarily re-purposed for some student activities. The new classrooms will help address the space needs at the school.



Construction crew at the Warm Springs Academy.

## Tribes refute state delegation of authority to the Grand Ronde

The Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs has treaty-protected fishing rights in the lower Columbia River and its tributaries, including the Willamette and Sandy rivers. Willamette Falls in particular is a very important treaty-reserved fishery of the tribes. The tribes also have treaty-protected rights to hunt on unclaimed lands in western Oregon, as tribal ancestors had done since time immemorial.

Earlier this month, the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission voted to approve an agreement negotiated between state Fish and Wildlife and the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde. The agreement claims to delegate certain state of Oregon rights to the Grand Ronde tribe to co-manage fish and wildlife resources in areas protected by the Treaty of 1855 of the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs.

The state commission voted to approve the agreement despite the strong objection of the Warm Springs tribes, along with the other treaty-tribes of the Columbia River: The Yakama, Umatilla and Nez Perce tribes.

"We are very disappointed," said Jonathan Smith Sr., Warm

*The treaty tribes are presently evaluating the commission action, and determining the best response.*

Springs Tribal Council Chairman. The tribes are presently evaluating the commission action, and determining a response. Councilman Smith and other tribal leaders believe the state Fish and Wildlife Commission "rushed" its decision regarding its delegation of authority to Grand Ronde. The decision has the potential to harm the tribes' relationship with the state in serious ways that are not entirely clear.

Warm Springs Council members, tribal fish and wildlife officials, and members who regularly fish at Willamette Falls regret the state action, and the failure to engage in a timely and meaningful way with the Warm Springs and other treaty tribes of the Columbia River. The Warm Springs Council is committed to addressing the affront to tribal sovereignty in the manner that is in the best interest of the tribal members, and generations into the future.

## For dedicated staff at W.S. Clinic

### IHS Regional Office recognition for team effort during covid

Along with his co-workers, Edison Yazzie was part of the Warm Springs Indian Health Service clinic team during the worst time of the Covid-19 pandemic. It was the time of the highest stress, because no one yet knew anything about the virus except that it was very dangerous. And this was especially true for people in the health care field, who had to rely more than ever on co-workers and friends on the job.

"We all helped each other," Mr. Yazzie says. "We all tried to help lift each other, and keep the moral up."

Edison worked as the equipment repair and maintenance person at the clinic during covid. "I got to know everybody," he says.

"I could see how tired they were. It was a tough time. Sometimes, maybe I tried to make people laugh, I don't know."

His co-workers appreciated his attitude, how he kept things in perspective, looking forward to better days. Experiences growing up, in the difficult boarding schools in Arizona, must have helped give him the strong and in time always positive view of life.



D. McMechan/Spilyay

Edison Yazzie, now working at transitional housing, with his IHS Award for Heroism, for his work at the clinic during covid.

As the covid pandemic has calmed down, the people Edison worked with referred his name to the Portland Area office of the Indian Health Service. And this month Cpt. Marcus Martinez, director of the Portland Area HIS, awarded Edison with Director's Award Covid-19 Pandemic Heroism.

Edison, now working at the transitional housing center, was surprised when he heard about the IHS award. "I guess it meant a lot to everyone," he says of the co-workers who nominated him.

"I want to thank the staff at the clinic for how they helped out here

during the pandemic," Edison said.

He is one of among a number of people at the Warm Springs clinic who earned recognition awards for their work during covid.

The Case Management team at the Warm Springs clinic, for instance, earned Portland Area IHS Award for Fostering relationships; the Warm Springs office of accounts receivable team, and the Warm Springs Health and Wellness Center Team 1 each earned the IHS Portland Area Director's Award.

*More on the teams and individuals, whose dedication during the pandemic helped to save lives and keep people healthy, on page 4.*

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