

Lessons of the lamprey at Willamette Falls celebration

Members of the four Treaty tribes of the Columbia River gathered in July at Willamette Falls for traditional lamprey harvesting.

While young people were gathering the eels, hundreds more people gathered nearby at Clackamette Park in Oregon City for the Third Annual Lamprey Celebration, this year hosted by the Yakama Nation.

Lamprey harvesting typically takes place early in the morning. So while only some were harvested gathered on the day of the celebration, hundreds of the fish had already been gathered in weeks prior. Many of those were served at the celebration.

Pacific lamprey are over 450 million years old, predating dinosaurs.

While the Lamprey Celebration was mainly for tribal members, the event was also open to the wider community. For people new to the event, this marked their first time eating lamprey. It also offered a chance for advocacy and learning about lamprey and their cultural significance.

“Lamprey aren’t really seen as a pretty fish, if you will,” said Erik Holt, Nimípuu, while sitting on the mossy rocks at the base of Willamette Falls. “Some people don’t have an understanding of what lamprey really are and why they’re so important to the Indigenous nations that rely on them.”

Oldest fish on Earth

The Pacific lamprey are one of the oldest species in the world, predating dinosaurs. The fish have been around for over 450 million years. Lamprey have long, slippery bodies and although they have no jaws or



Rosalind Johnson, of the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs, separates the pieces of the Pacific lamprey in order to salt and air dry the fish, as she demonstrates the method at the third annual Lamprey Celebration earlier this month.

bones, they have a mouth full of teeth.

Yakama member Tom Farley, 17, who grew up eating lamprey, remembers one particular origin story. “The snake and eel raced to the river and the last one there got their bones taken away. The lamprey lost,” Tom said.

Numbers of lamprey are nowhere near what they once were. At one point in time, thousands of lamprey could easily be found at Willamette Falls. So many that the scene used to be referred to as ‘Mermaid’s Hair’ as lamprey flowed up and down the falls.

“People just don’t understand the importance of them,” said Elaine Harvey. “Some people even call him a trash fish, which is really sad, because it’s the oldest fish on Earth. They survived through the dinosaur age. They survived through the ice age.”

Despite surviving hundreds of millions of years, Ms. Harvey has watched the decline of lamprey

populations within her lifetime. Now, she fears lamprey are on the verge of extinction, which is why she advocates for them, now with her work at the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission as the watershed department manager.

“The tribes are bringing awareness to the lamprey so that they won’t go extinct,” Elaine said. “Because they really are important in our ceremonies. And they’re just as important as salmon and the other first foods. All our Indian food we believe is medicine to us.”

For future generations

During the July celebration, over a dozen young women and girls dressed in their traditional regalia greeted hundreds of guests with a welcome dance at Clackamette Park, before introducing themselves and their royalty titles, first in their Indigenous language.

Elder Davis ‘Yellowash’

Washines greeted the crowd, speaking for the first three minutes in Sahaptin. Yellowash is the board chair and Yakama Nation delegate for the Willamette Falls Trust and helps advocate for creator has left for our people to come and gather the sacred food, our first foods, our salmon, our lamprey,” Yellowash said. “They would set up camps just like we are here today setting up a camp. Instead of teepees, we have these canopies nowadays.”

Yakama Nation elder Davis ‘Yellowash’ Washines greeted community members at the Lamprey Celebration on July 12, 2024, speaking first in his Native language, Sahaptin. “We’re glad that you’re here and that you brought your children, your grandchildren, maybe even your great grandchildren,” Yellowash told the crowd. (Photo by Nika Bartoo-Smith Underscore Native News / ICT)

Smiling at a crowd filled with citizens of Native nations and members from the wider community, faces both young and old, Yellowash reflected on a lamprey harvest he attended 30 years ago, back in 1994.

He remembered a very similar celebration—setting up a big tent and sharing a meal with friends, relatives and the general public

“The meal is a medicine to us, especially our first foods like the salmon and the eel. And it renews our strength,” Yellowash said. “I want to thank you for bringing the children, all these young people here. Because they’re the ones that are watching us. They’re listening to what we say, what we do. They’re the ones that are going to carry on into the future.”

No passage drives decline of Willamette Chinook and Steelhead

Upper Willamette River Steelhead and Chinook salmon should remain listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act.

This is the conclusion of National Oceanic Atmospheric Agency Fisheries, now in its 5-year review of the status of the species.

NOAA Fisheries must review the status of species listed under the Endangered Species Act at least every 5 years.

Many communities, tribes, and conservation organizations have restored habitat along the Willamette and its tributaries.

Chinook salmon and steelhead still lack safe downstream passage past dams that limit access to the high-elevation habitat that once fostered their wild populations.

Only further action can halt their continuing decline, which could be compounded by climate change.

“The real issue is that they need safe connections to and from the high-quality habitat we know is above the dams,” said Annie Birnie, who led the review. “As long as they remain cut off, we’re unlikely to see signs of recovery.”

Guilty plea in federal murder case in Yakama

A woman accused of killing Destiny Lloyd on the Yakama Reservation the day after Christmas 2017 pleaded guilty to a federal murder charge.

Tahsheena Sam, 35, of White Swan appeared in U.S. District Court in Yakima earlier this month. She pleaded guilty to second-degree murder in Indian Country. Prosecutors allege that Sam struck Lloyd in the head several times with a

large wrench on or around December 26, 2017, in a robbery attempt.

Sam was indicted on June 13, 2023, for first-degree murder in Indian Country and felony murder in Indian Country. The arraignment Tuesday was for the second-degree murder charge.

U.S. District Judge Mary K. Dimke accepted Sam’s guilty plea and scheduled sentencing for 2:15 p.m. September 17. Federal prosecutors

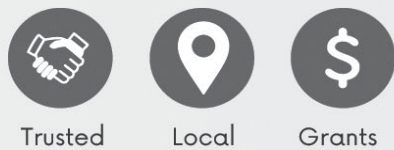
that day will move to dismiss the indictment with those two charges filed in June 2023, according to the plea agreement.

Under the agreement, she could see a sentence of not less than 20 years in prison.

Lloyd, a 23-year-old child care worker at Legends Casino Hotel in Toppenish, was last seen on the evening of Christmas Day 2017.

Central Oregon Septic Assistance Program

Financial aid for septic repairs

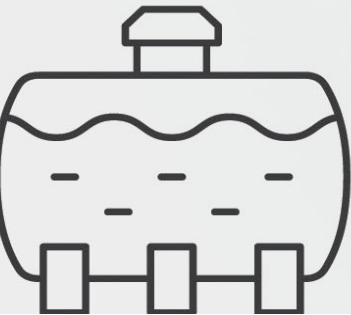


Do you own a home in the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, Deschutes, Jefferson, or Crook County and have a failed or failing septic system?

Need support covering those high costs?

Grants available through the Central Oregon Septic Assistance Program may cover up to \$20,000 for a standard system or to connect to the sewer line and up to \$30,000 for an alternative system for repairs incurred after January 2023 for eligible households.

For more information, scan the QR code or visit our website at the link below.



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&
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SEPTEMBER 10TH, 2024

WORLD SUICIDE
PREVENTION
AWARENESS DAY

WS PREVENTION PAVILLION

GLOW WALK
(ONE LAP AROUND CAMPUS)

PARTICIPANT - T-SHIRT/GLOW STICK/PIZZA TICKET

7:30 P.M.

Join us for one day for World Suicide Prevention Awareness Day.
We will see you there!

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ANDY.LEONARD@WSTRIBES.ORG

Do you have a passion for helping others?

Consider becoming a homecare worker (HCW)

- HCWs support older adults and people with disabilities in their own homes.

Benefits include:

- COMPETITIVE WAGES- STARTING AT \$19.50/HR
- HEALTH INSURANCE AND PAID TIME OFF BENEFITS
- HELPING PEOPLE/PROVIDING NEEDED CARE
- FLEXIBLE HOURS/WORKING INDEPENDENTLY
- PAID TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES
- CAREER ADVANCEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

You must be at least 18 years old, pass a background check and be legally able to work in the United States.

Ready to apply?

Pick up an application packet at

the Family Resource Center-

Contact Rosemary “Mushy” Alarcon or

ask for an HCW Packet at the APD Office 189 NE
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