

# Team Empire MMA representing the tribes

Team Empire MMA was helping represent Warm Springs this summer at the amateur mixed martial arts competition, held at the Northern Quest Resort & Casino in Spokane.

At the show—before a sold-out standing room only crowd of more than 1,500 fans—two tribal members competed, one of who won his showcase match. And Jose Eriza, married into the tribes, won the amateur MMA Heavyweight Title Belt.

Jose, 42, competitor and coach of Team Empire MMA, works with his wife Amy, who is the team manager. The team also features tribal members Hamley Sam Smith, Bonius Smith and Joseph Stacona Eriza.

Jose and Amy have a training facility at their residence, and are working on opening a new training gym. “These gentlemen put their all into what they do,” Amy says. “And the training every day is just



Courtesy Amy Eriza

Empire MMA training session with Jose Eriza and Joseph Eriza Stacona.

one of the things they are passionate about when it comes to this sport.”

MMA can be very a tough sport, obviously. When

Jose won his title belt last month, for instance, his opponent broke his hand; and Jose suffered a concussion and fractured nose. At that

event Bonius won his match, and Hamley got very close, going all three rounds.

MMA is a very popular sport, especially among young people. And it’s difficult to master, involving techniques of boxing, wrestling and jiu-jitsu.

Team Empire invites anyone who is interested in learning more to contact them. They have a Facebook page under Team Empire MMA. Or a phone number is 541-325-9822. Jose and Amy know many of the people in the sport around the Northwest, such as Rick Little, the most influential MMA promoter in the region.

The approach with the Team Empire is to learn and grow and have a good and challenging time. Their motto as stated on the Facebook page says:

*A loss isn't really a loss. In our books it only makes us better!*

## Around Indian Country

### Why we are seeing fewer huckleberries

As gatherers are aware, there are not as many Western huckleberries as there used to be. And the decline of huckleberries is likely to have an impact on other Native communities, native plant species and wildlife.

Among the numerous threats to the berry bushes include the following:

Increasingly destructive forest fires are annually torching thousands of acres of medium- and high-density forests, which provide the shade huckleberries need to survive warm summer months.

This creates another problem—decreased flora following wildfires makes it difficult for pollinators to reach huckleberry patches.

Related to climate change, rising temperatures mean many huckle-

berries ripen prematurely, before pollinators can get to them.

Invasive species also play a role in the huckleberry’s decline. Root-eating, black vine weevils, Scotch broom and nonnative thistle each pose a threat. In other Northwest news:

Fire Managers say that many wildfires currently burning in Oregon and Washington, and potentially new ones, will persist until the region experiences significant rain or snow this fall. With widespread lightning expected this month, fire managers will be adopting a strategic approach to integrate risk management, ecosystem resilience, and community involvement on long-duration fires before typical strong east wind events potentially arrive around the beginning of fall.

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