

A story of art and resilience

Perseverance lies at the core of artist Lillian Pitt. Last winter, for instance, frozen pipes burst and flooded her art studio for days during Portland’s week-long deep freeze.

The water destroyed all of her equipment and years of creative work. Lillian had just turned 80, and she asked herself if it was finally time to call it quits.

Nearly a year later, working in her house in front of the studio, Lillian reaches for a thin purple pen. She sits on her back patio, putting the finishing touches on her latest artwork—a small anthropomorphic figure cut from a flat piece of plywood, with a one-inch-diameter convex seashell placed at the top, suggesting an abstract face that reflects the morning light from its iridescent surface.

“I’m making the Star People,” she explains, running the purple pen across the figure’s grainy wooden surface. “The stars brought these people to us to help us



Lillian Pitt

live better, be kind, and be thoughtful to each other.”

Nearby, her new studio is nearing completion. Thanks to the support of friends and the larger community, she successfully raised enough money to repair the water damage. Soon, the small outbuilding behind her house will once again provide a space for her to create, allowing Pitt to produce her elegant and welcoming pieces.

Journey of discovery

Lillian was born in 1943 on the Warm Springs Res-

ervation. As a child, she was surrounded by the creativity of her elders. They did beadwork and other traditional Native art. Her father was a singer, and played on a local baseball team.

“The Indians and the white guys always fought,” she recalls. “They ended up fighting each other after every single game. It was no fun.”

After graduating from Madras High School in the early 1960s, Lillian wanted to escape the local prejudice and set her sights westward toward Portland.

She found her footing in the city, building a successful career as a beautician.

Soon, though, life took an unexpected turn setting her on a path of self-discovery and deepening her connection to her Indigenous roots. When chronic back pain forced her to quit hairdressing in the 1970s, searching for a new way forward, she turned to art.

“That’s what changed my life—touching clay. Feeling

it, smelling it in all its stages, from moisture to dryness to fire. It just seemed to tie me to Mother Earth.”

Though she knew she had found something profound, she was uncertain about her path forward. Seeking guidance, she returned to Warm Springs to speak with her elders—a visit that led to a revelation about the place she had always called home.

“I asked them, ‘Who am I? Who are my people, and where are we from?’”

Pitt was stunned to learn that her ancestors had originally lived along the Columbia River Gorge for thousands of years before being relocated to Warm Springs in the mid-1800s by the U.S. government. She had always believed her people were from the high desert of Central Oregon, but in reality, their true homeland was along the river.

Through this discovery, she learned of the rich history of her people in the Gorge, etched in the powerful and vivid petroglyphs along the

Columbia River. Among them was the image that would become central to her work—*She Who Watches*.

“When I finally saw *She Who Watches*, I felt a profound sense of identity and strength that no one can take away from me, ever,” Lillian remembers. “I just felt like—I’ve been found. I found myself.”

Her artistic career spans large and small, humble yet grand. From fine jewelry and tiny clay animals to monumental public works, her pieces can be seen across the state.

One can see her public art along Portland’s Light Rail stations, South Waterfront’s *River Guardian*, the *Welcome Gate* on the Vancouver Land Bridge, and her sculptures at Portland State University’s Native American Student and Community Center, a building designed by her close friend and architect Donald Stastney, architect of the Museum at Warm Springs.

Lillian continues to look ahead, persevering, creating, and educating. Recently, the Architecture Foundation of Oregon honored her at its annual Honored Citizen



Awards for her impact on the built environment, her dedication to keeping Oregon’s Indigenous stories alive through public art, and her commitment to mentoring the next generation of Native American artists.

In her honor, the AFO established the *Tsagaglalal (She Who Watches)* Scholarship fund, supporting Indigenous students pursuing a degree in art or architecture at Portland State University.

Back at home, Lillian puts the final touches on one of her latest *Star People*, looking forward to getting back to work in her new studio.

Story by Jacob Pander, OPB

Federal cuts’ impact on Indian education services

Haskell Indian Nations University in Lawrence, Kansas is experiencing a personnel disruption. The university has been forced to lay off dozens of employees, placing its accreditation at risk and jeopardizing student services.

Meanwhile, Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute in Albuquerque, New Mexico, has similarly lost seven employees, and broader cuts have ravaged agencies that provide educational, health and other support to Native communities.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs has lost 188 employees, while 2,600 Department of the Interior workers have been dismissed.

Initially, 20 percent of the Indian Health Service workforce faced layoffs, although these cuts were later withdrawn following significant backlash. The layoffs are part of a broader restructuring, or downsizing of the federal executive branch of the government.

A particular target has been ‘diversity, equity and inclusion,’ or DEI, initiatives. The implication of this is clear, university officials have said: Tribal educational institutions, operating under Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act contracts, are facing “a crisis.”



An example: Sierra Two Bulls, an Oglala Lakota from the Oglala Sioux Tribe, was among those laid off. She had been a faculty member at Haskell Indian Nations University for six months after serving as an adjunct instructor for seven years.

Beyond the loss of her position, Two Bulls expressed deep concern for her students, many of whom will now face disruptions to their education. Speaking to the ‘LastRealIndians’ website, she said,

“I am devastated and heartbroken not only for myself and my colleagues but also for all our students. The first is my job security with great benefits like my healthcare plan.

“The second is I am no longer able to teach and empower our next generation of Native students who are our future leaders.”

The Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act, or ISDEAA, passed in 1975, as a concession to the struggle for tribal

self-governance.

The law granted Native nations greater control over education, healthcare, and other essential services, allowing tribes to contract with federal agencies to administer their own programs.

The act empowered tribes to direct resources according to their needs, fostering self-governance and cultural preservation.

It allowed tribes to assume control of educational institutions, ensuring that curricula reflect Indigenous knowledge and traditions.

The federal administration mass firings, however, undermine the very foundations of the ISDEAA, as the loss of federal personnel stalls the administration of self-determination contracts and leaves tribal schools and colleges in limbo.

Administration critics say the mass layoffs at BIA and the Department of the Interior signal a broader rollback

of financial support for tribal programs, leading to uncertainty and budget shortfalls for Native-run institutions.

Many tribal leaders have spoken out against the administration’s actions, calling them an assault on treaty rights and self-determination. Chase Iron Eyes, executive director of the Sacred Defense Fund, condemned the cuts. He says,

“Indian country is experiencing catastrophic blows because of a lack of understanding of the distinct political status of tribal nations and Native America. It is not appropriate legally for the federal government to cut critical trust and treaty obligations that Indian Country depends on.”

Others have echoed this sentiment, emphasizing that these cuts violate the federal government’s fundamental responsibility to honor its commitments to Indigenous communities.

Tribal nations have long resisted federal overreach through legal action, coalition-building, and economic independence. Many are preparing lawsuits against the latest round of layoffs, citing past successes in challenging funding cuts that violated treaty rights.

PAPALAXSIMISHA NATIVE AMERICAN STUDENT UNION

3rd annual NASU POWWOW



SAVE THE DATE

FRIDAY

MAY 23rd, 2025

MADRAS HIGH SCHOOL GYM



Jillisa Suppah
jillisa@papalaxsimisha.org



WILLIE "STAX" STACONA

2ND ANNUAL MEN'S & WOMEN'S OPEN TOURNAMENT

WARM SPRINGS, OR MAY 23TH-25TH 2025

12 MENS

*** 10 MAN ROSTER ***

10 WOMENS

*** 10 MAN ROSTER ***

5 FOULS INDIVIDUALLY EACH DIVISION

CONTACTS

ANDY (541-630-1794)

BRIANA (541-460-8821)

ELSIE (509-305-6738)

MARIAH (541-797-9993)

AWARDS BOTH DIVISIONS

1ST - PENDLETON LEATHER SLEEVES

2ND

3RD

- MVP JACKETS

- ALL STARS

- MR / MS HUSTLE

- SPORTSMANSHIP

\$450 ENTRY FEE

(CASHAPP, FB PAY, & MONEY ORDER)

HALF DUE 4.19.25 - DEADLINE 5.17.25 (NON REFUNDABLE)

HIGH SCHOOL PLAYERS ARE REQUIRED SIGNED WAIVER





Give Your Child an

EARLY HEAD START

Warm Springs Early Head Start is

NOW RECRUITING CHILDREN

AGES 0-3

Early Head Start Offers:

- Child Development
- Family Support
- Prenatal Care

Services Include:

- Home Visits
- Parenting Education
- Health Education
- Housing Assistance
- Job Training
- Substance Abuse Prevention
- Domestic Violence Prevention

Learn More about signing up your child for

Early Head Start by calling the

Warm Springs Early Childhood Education Center

at 541-553-3241

Pioneer Rock & Monument

201 Crafton Rd - PO Box 348 509-773-4702

GOLDENDALE, WA 98620



Specializing in Native Design

Check our prices

Something for every budget

Family owned business, making custom HEADSTONES for the people of Warm Springs for 35 years

We carve them right in our shop NO MIDDLE-MAN

Check out our work in the GALLERY at

www.pioneerrock.com



Impact at NOAA of agency job cuts

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, NOAA, is facing job cuts, according to Northwest federal lawmakers. At least eight-hundred-eighty workers across the country will lose their jobs, said Washington U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell.

She said that the federal job cuts would put people’s lives at risk and threaten commercial and tribal fisheries.

The agency most directly affects Northwest residents through the National Weather Service, which provides weather forecasts and warnings.

NOAA also operates the Marine Operations Center in Newport, which services the agency’s Pacific fleet of ships.