

Indian Head: ‘Never a more exciting time to visit.’



The all-new Tule Sports Bar & Grill will feature expanded seating, multiple full-service bars, and large-screen televisions placed both inside the venue and throughout the casino floor

Architectural rendering, courtesy Indian Head Casino

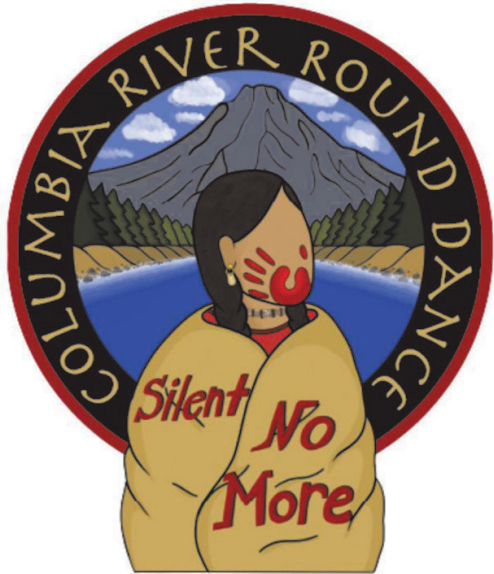
(from page 1)

The expansion aligns with Indian Head Casino’s continued growth and future plans, including the addition of sports betting, live craps and roulette, new table games such as Spanish 21, and 150 new slot titles requested by guests. “We’re investing in the future

of Indian Head Casino to bring our guests a bigger, better and more dynamic entertainment experience,” said general manager Shawn McDaniel. “From enhanced dining and sports viewing to new gaming options, there’s never been a more exciting time to visit.”

Guests can continue to enjoy the full casino experience during renovations, with minimal interruption to gaming operations. For updates and reopening announcements, visit the website: IndianHeadCasino.com; or follow Indian Head Casino on social media.

SAVE THE DATE



4th Annual Columbia River Round Dance in honor of Missing & Murdered Indigenous People



FRIDAY MAY 1, 2026
THE DALLES, OR



Hosted by: CRITFC Victim Assistance Program
Event Coordinator: Charlieann, (503) 878-1847 cherkshan@critfc.org
Vendor Contact: Venus, (541) 399-7864 vallison@critfc.org

ATNI addresses huckleberry protection, sovereignty, and AI

The Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians 2026 Winter Convention brought together tribal leaders, youth delegates, and policy advocates for three days of urgent discussions on protecting sacred First Foods, defending tribal sovereignty, and addressing technology’s impacts on Indigenous communities and the environment.

ATNI’s membership of 57 Northwest tribal governments from Oregon, Idaho, Washington, south-east Alaska, Northern California and Western Montana comes together for semiannual conventions to present information and develop consensus on matters of shared interest.

Day one: **Huckleberries, and protecting treaty-reserved rights and resources.**

The convention kicked off, earlier this month at the Portland Hilton Downtown hotel, with the General Assembly in the morning, and continued through the afternoon with the first day of break-out sessions.

The Natural Resources committee began with urgent calls to protect one of the Columbia Plateau’s sacred and threatened First Foods, a topic that continued into the Food Sovereignty committee sessions.

Yakama Nation members gathered during ATNI to call for the extension of the 2025 closure of the Gifford Pinchot National Forest’s commercial huckleberry picking season.

Elaine Harvey, of the Yakama Nation, is the manager of the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission Watershed Department.

Ms. Harvey shared extensive documentation of the devastating impacts commercial harvesting has had on tribal communities and huckleberry populations.

“As a tribal gatherer, I’m barely getting berries. I am worried for more than us, I worry about wildlife who depend on those berries,” Ms. Harvey said. “The current commercial harvest is not sustainable for our people.”

The 2025 closure marked a significant shift after 24 years of commercial harvest in the forest.

Elaine presented data showing dramatic habitat loss, noting that huckleberry habitat along road systems has disappeared significantly since 1985—sixteen years before commercial harvesting began.

“This map shows the loss of huckleberry habitat, and as someone familiar with this area, I know a lot of the fields are experiencing similar conditions throughout the habitat,” Harvey explained, adding that there has been “no cultural burning,” or management of invasive species by the U.S. Forest Service, despite the tribes’ requesting they do so to maintain the ecosys-

“Commercialization is a big deal. It’s out there and affects all our traditional plants. It’s a good fight for all of Indian country.”

Brigette McConville
Tribal Councilwoman,
Seekseequa District

tem.

The impact has gone beyond environmental concerns. Harvey described threatening encounters with commercial pickers: “They’re harassing tribal people to a point where our elders don’t want to go back up there. I’ve seen it firsthand; I’ve had pitbulls sicked on me, my aunt has had machetes pulled on her, they block our roads, and take all our family camping grounds. It’s been very detrimental.”

“Without this closure, our longhouse can’t fill baskets, jars, or freezers,” Ms. Harvey said. “Some years we didn’t have any berries for our funerals, but the 2025 ban changed the harvest. Last year our people saw the berries return.”

She emphasized the historical context, referencing High Country News research showing tribal chiefs addressed these same issues 90 years ago with forest supervisors. “High Country News did a really good story on this issue,” she noted.

The commercial harvest has primarily benefited outside parties and has not been a source of monetary resources for the tribes, ever.

Harvey pointed to huckleberry ice cream from major dairy brands as an example, asking “Who is really benefiting from our traditional foods?”

She questioned when the Forest Service issued permission to commercialize traditional foods: “The Yakamaa Nation asked the federal advisory committee, who gave you permission to commercialize our First Foods? No answer.

“Did you consult the tribes when they transformed our berry basket material into a special forest product? I believe they didn’t consult. What tribe would want their berries or roots commercialized?”

The resolution’s urgency stems from financial pressures. “They’re getting pressure” to reopen commercial harvesting, Harvey warned.

Commercial pickers can earn \$100 to \$200 per gallon in good years, creating “high incentive to be greedy. To take it all,” she said.

“We’re taught not to be greedy, to leave enough for the wildlife.”

Bridget McConville, Warm Springs Tribal Council member and CRITFC commissioner, voiced support, noting they face similar issues in Mount Hood National Forest.

“Commercialization is a big deal. It’s out there and affects all our traditional plants. It’s a good fight for all of Indian country,” she said before requesting that the Mt. Hood National Forest be added to the resolution.

The presentations took place before the Natural Resources Committee, co-chaired by CRITFC Federal Government Affairs Director Paul Ward, Yakama, and Andrew Goblin, Tulalip, as well as before the Food Sovereignty Committee co-chaired by CRITFC Salmon Marketing Director Buck Jones, Umatilla, and Louie Ungaro, Muckleshoot.

Following the day’s policy discussions, ATNI hosted a culture night at the Portland Art Museum, offering convention attendees an evening of Indigenous art and storytelling.

The event featured access to the Rick Bartow: Storyteller exhibit, celebrating the acclaimed Wiyot artist’s powerful work that bridged traditional Native imagery with contemporary expression.

Later, a special screening of Guardian of the Land was accompanied by a live violin performance by internationally recognized Native composer Genevieve Gros-Louis (Huron-Wendat).

Director Laronn Katchia, of Warm Springs, narrator Carlos Calica, Tribal Councilman, and the film’s mask-carver and artist Toma Villa, Yakama, each shared insights into their creative processes and the cultural lessons embedded in the project.

Day two: **Defending tribal sovereignty from ICE enforcement.**

Day two of the convention focused on protecting tribal sovereignty amid heightened federal immigration enforcement, with the Law & Justice Committee advancing Resolution #2026-009, ‘Protecting Tribal Citizens and Communities from ICE.’

The resolution demanded that the Department of Homeland Security and Immigration and Customs Enforcement, ICE, notify, consult with, and obtain permission from tribal nations before entering tribal treaty and reservation territories.

The resolution addressed reports of the Department of Homeland Security and ICE officers profiling tribal citizens, entering tribal lands without consultation, rejecting tribally-issued and federally recognized



J. Gavini/CRITFC

CRITFC Commissioner and Warm Springs Tribal Councilman Carlos Calica speaks about his experience participating in the Guardian of our Land film, produced by Oregon Public Broadcasting, during a screening at the Portland Art Museum

photo identification, and violating both tribal sovereignty and tribal members’ U.S. civil rights. It emphasized that tribal citizens are U.S. citizens under the Indian Citizenship Act of 1924 and therefore not subject to immigration detention or deportation.

Key provisions require federal agencies to recognize tribal photo identification as federally acceptable ID under the REAL ID Act of 2005, and urge member tribes to issue ‘Know Your Rights’ bulletins. The resolution reaffirms each tribal nation’s responsibility to protect its people while upholding consultation requirements under federal, tribal, and international law, including the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The resolution specifically invokes Article 31 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, UNDRIP, which states: “Military activities shall not take place in the lands or territories of indigenous peoples, unless... freely agreed with or requested by the indigenous peoples concerned.”

The day’s agenda also featured presentations on Indian education, IRS regulations impacting tribes, Department of Health and Human Services updates, and trade opportunities with Canada. Convention delegates heard from federal agencies including the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Bureau of Reclamation on matters affecting tribal communities across the Northwest.

Day three: **Youth voices on Artificial Intelligence.**

The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation Youth Leadership Council traveled to Portland to participate in the Youth Committee session, bringing youth perspectives on artificial intelligence’s, AI, impact on tribal communities.

Co-chaired by Johnny Buck, Wanapum, and Patsy Whitefoot. Yakama, the session focused heavily

on AI’s effects on youth and students, with the Umatilla delegation sharing concerns about technology’s impacts on mental health, cultural resources, and the environment.

In discussion of the risks of AI, Junior Youth Council Chair Abigayle McIntosh-Gavin’s first concern was for the fish.

“They’re using too much water, and putting it back hot,” she said of AI water-use in the Columbia Gorge.

“Every animal has a job to do, and what happens when they don’t have what they need to survive?”

“The salmon were the first animal people to stand up and say they will take care of us,” Abigayle continued.

“The salmon take care of everything else, so if they die, will we lose all our foods? If we don’t do what we promised to do and lose the salmon, will the rest of them go away too?”

The other youth also raised concerns about AI’s environmental toll, particularly its water usage and effects on salmon habitat. “AI needs water to generate and it puts back water that’s bad that can kill the fish,” council member Kiya Orna added, “The water is hot, and it’s contaminated. Salmon are having to deal with water that causes harm to them.”

Youth council members also worried about AI’s threat to First Foods security. “AI could share where our First Foods are and the places to find them, leaking the locations,” explained member Lisa Faye McIntosh-Gavin. “Other people could take our foods. If AI stole our First Foods locations, it would be illegal; those are our rights.”

Beyond environmental and cultural concerns, the youth highlighted AI’s effects on mental health and family relationships. “AI is taking a huge control on the youth, and adults should be concerned for the youth,” said Ayanna Star. “Parents should ask, ‘Is this harming my child or helping my child?’ That says a lot because parents don’t always care, passing classes is all that matters, but it comes to a point where the concern should be what if youth are not doing okay mentally and start going to AI for things?”

Luka Worden added perspective on AI’s educational impacts: “AI is really having a bad impact on youth; it’s affecting us education-wise and mental health-wise, our mindsets in general. Students think they can go to AI and can’t talk to parents, AI is not a parent, they’re looking for advice not from their family or peers, and that’s not a good thing to do. It shouldn’t be used that way; it should only be for certain things instead of impacting younger people the way it is.”

This article is provided by the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission.