

Storms send South Yamhill River to fourth-highest crest

By Dean Rhodes

Smoke Signals editor

A series of Pacific storms that battered Oregon and southwestern Washington between Sunday, Dec. 6, and Wednesday, Dec. 9, sent the South Yamhill River at Willamina to its fourth highest crest ever recorded, according to the National Weather Service's Advanced Hydrologic Prediction Service.

The South Yamhill River reached 14.72 feet during the early morning of Tuesday, Dec. 8, and sent water cascading across Highway 18 just northeast of Spirit Mountain Casino at Rowell Creek Road, limiting traffic to one lane and shutting down the highway briefly.

The river's record crest is 17.1 feet in 1964.

Because of the inclement weather and threat of flooding, Grand Ronde Governance Center employees were sent home at noon Monday, Dec. 7, the only interruption in work hours during the stormy weather. According to the Weather Channel, the Grand Ronde area received more than 7 inches of rain in the first nine days of December.

A break on Tuesday, Dec. 8, allowed the rain to seep into the ground and rivers and creeks to recede before another storm barreled into the area on Tuesday evening and Wednesday morning. However, the storm was not as intense and the South Yamhill River only reached 13.3 feet and stayed within its banks.

Tribal employees reported to



Photo by Michelle Alaimo

A crew from Portland General Electric repairs power lines west of milepost 19 on Highway 18 after a tree fell on them affecting power in the Grand Ronde area for some residents on Tuesday, Dec. 8.

work at regular times on Wednesday, Dec. 9.

Although more rain fell in the Grand Ronde area later in the week, the storms were not as wet and river levels decreased dramatically.

Tribal Emergency Operations Coordinator Jamie Baxter activated the Tribe's Incident Management Team on Monday, Dec. 7, to monitor the weather situation and prepare for possible flooding in the Grand Ronde area.

The team, led by Planning Department Manager Rick George, met on Monday and Tuesday, and

included Tribal staff and representatives from the Grand Ronde Police Department, Tribal Council, General Manager's Office, Publications, Human Resources, Public Works, Facilities and Maintenance, Natural Resources, Information Systems, Planning, GIS and other departments.

Even as late as Thursday, Dec. 10, the team was sending out warnings on the Tribe's Facebook page regarding possible funnel clouds and lightning in the Grand Ronde area.

Damage to Tribal buildings was relatively minor, with water seep-

age reported to three Tribal buildings, as well as driveway rocking that was washed away from the access road off Highway 22. The day-use area also flooded, but damage was inconsequential.

Spirit Mountain Casino General Manager Stan Dillon said the storms caused limited closures because guests left early on Monday and employees who live far away called in because of flooding in the areas in which they reside.

"We closed bingo, Playworld, poker, keno and Legends," Dillon said. "There was no damage to the facility on the first night of the flooding."

However, the casino experienced power issues on Tuesday.

"Two of our generators did not kick in like they are supposed to," Dillon said. "So we had the area of the casino near the main cage and poker go dark, as well as the lodge, ballrooms, etc. This did cause bingo to close and we refunded guests their money."

Besides water limiting travel on Highway 18 on Monday night, Grand Ronde Road south of the highway was unpassable on Monday and Highway 22 (Hebo Road) west of Grand Ronde was closed after a portion of the road washed away at milepost 12.

In addition, a tree fell west of milepost 19 on Highway 18 on Tuesday night, affecting power in the Grand Ronde area for some residents.

High winds also distributed tree debris throughout the area. ■

Having a single story can be detrimental to youth

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level as they journey through their education," Sherwood said. "The training will demonstrate how the single story can be dangerous and detrimental to our youth, families and our culture as a Tribe."

Reeves provided Willamina teachers and administrators with a video she had seen while attending graduate school at the University of Oregon. She said she was attending a multi-cultural literacy class when she watched the video for the first time.

The video was a TED Talk given by Nigerian author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. The point of her talk was that people make the mistake of assuming people have only a single story. Adichie said people's lives and cultures are made up of many overlapping stories.

TED is a nonprofit organization established in 1984 that is devoted to spreading ideas through informative talks. TED stands for Technology, Entertainment and Design.

In the video, Adichie spoke of her own experiences with a single story and told how those experiences shaped her viewpoints at a young age and became the way she saw the world as well. Adichie said that if you show someone as just one thing and you do it over and over, they become that thing.

"All of these experiences make me who I am," said Adichie. "The

single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story."

Adichie said having a single story viewpoint causes disassociation rather than highlighting commonalities in people.

"The consequence of the single story is this: It robs people of dignity," said Adichie. "It makes our recognition of our equal humanity difficult. It emphasizes how we are different rather than how we are similar."

Almost 100 Willamina elementary, middle and high school teachers gathered for the training. After watching Adichie's TED Talk, teachers broke into small groups to discuss the video and answer questions provided by the Tribe's education staff.

Teachers were asked what the single story of the Willamina School District was. They were asked if the materials they were using in their classrooms were biased in any way. Teachers were asked if they had been the victim of a single story and if they had a single story viewpoint of others at any time during their education careers.

One teacher shared the story of a student that she knew who would fail not only in her classroom, but in life. The teacher described a nightmare scenario in which the child had no real chance at a good life because of her situation at home

and her behaviors caused by her home life. The teacher talked about having to pretend to have a bright outlook for this student.

"I remember thinking I had to fake being hopeful for her because in real life I had no hope for her," the teacher said. "I thought I knew her story. I just thought I knew it."

The teacher then shared how years after having this child as a student she saw her again as a young adult.

"Here was this glamorous, tall, well-dressed person and she's beautiful," the teacher said. "She had a beautiful child and she had just maximized everything she could do and her story wasn't at all what I had thought. I was wrong. We need to remember that and not think we know the rest of the story that we don't know."

Willamina Middle and High School Principal Tim France said he saw the video before it was shown to teachers.

France said he believes that it is "human nature" to have preconceived notions of people and that talking about the subject is a good reminder to take off the "lenses" that everyone uses when making judgments.

France said he hopes the training will refresh everybody's effort to get to know students before thinking they know their whole story.

"This is what we are here for," said France. "We really need to

make sure that we are helping kids to get to where they need to be."

Sherwood, whose children are Tribal members, said the training with teachers in Willamina was a "follow-up" to a collaborative project the groups worked on in August.

"This is an effort to get people to work together for the betterment of our children," Sherwood said. "It's about perspective and how you see others. Are you teaching everybody's story?"

Reeves said it is her goal and the goal of her program to partner with the local school districts, Willamina School District in particular.

"We're trying to make it a partnership and have that relationship with them," Reeves said of the teaching staff at the Willamina schools.

"There is that beautiful part of Willamina schools that we don't always see or that isn't always portrayed," Sherwood said. "I think today, why we chose this training was because we really wanted them (Willamina school teachers) to reflect on that, on have you been a victim of the single story? Or has the single story been something you've done to someone else? It was just really a lot of reflection."

Reeves said the goal of the single story training wasn't to try to teach the education staff something, but more as a reminder.

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