

'It's like once in a lifetime'

ECLIPSE continued
from front page

Launch” is a NASA-funded project that invites Native American student groups from four Northwest states – Washington, Oregon, Montana and Idaho – to build an artifact of cultural or scientific significance and launch it into the stratosphere by balloon.

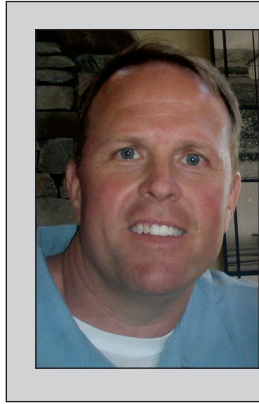
The Aug. 21 solar eclipse is the first to cross the continental United States since 1918, when one darkened skies from Washington to Florida. This eclipse will begin in Oregon and end in South Carolina, taking about 90 minutes to cross the continent.

The Warm Springs Reservation will be the launch site because of its convenient location in the eclipse’s path of totality and likelihood of clear skies.

Juan-Carlos Chavez, associate director of the Northwest Earth and Space Sciences Pipeline, said in an e-mail that this project was conceived to instill a passion for science in Native students.

“Through this event, one of our goals is to excite Native American K-12 and college students to pursue degrees in science, technology, engineering or math (STEM), and then return to their Tribes and fill the high-paying engineering and science research positions,” he said.

The Pipeline’s website states that NASA centers are valuable scientific resources for communities, but the closest one to the Pacific Northwest is in California. The Pipeline, funded by the NASA Science Mission Directorate, serves as a “virtual NASA center” whose goal is to bring STEM-centered education



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~ **Tim Barry**
Youth Education Program manager

to all communities including those underserved or underrepresented.

Youth Education Program Manager Tim Barry said exposure to programs like this is important for Tribal students to form a connection with the sciences.

“By the time they hit their senior year, they’re going, ‘You know what, I’ve had all these experiences and I love doing this,’” Barry said.

Tribal Curriculum Specialist Mercedes Reeves and Barry said news of the program came to them gradually through word of mouth and e-mails from sources involved with the project, and they knew they wanted Grand Ronde to be involved.

There were initially only three students signed up for the project because August seemed so far off.

“The future just doesn’t exist to an eighth-grader,” Reeves said.

She said she encouraged the students she knew that they would enjoy it and to get the permission slips signed by their parents in time. Now 13 middle and high school students are participating.

Reeves said this will be an opportunity for students to see with their own eyes things that may seem abstract in a classroom.

“It’s putting into practice what they’ve been reading in textbooks,” she said.

The project will consist of several meetings spread over the coming months. Students participating include high schoolers Nikeia Barton, Conrad Farmer, Andrea Grijalva, Kailiyah Krehbiel, Wynter LaChance, Nokoa Mercier, Trinity Sherwood, Keeton Walker and Isaiah Fisher, and middle schoolers Dominik Briant, Mabel Brisbois, Isabelle Grout and Nakai Rock.

At the first meeting held on Jan. 27, participants brainstormed ideas for the cultural artifact they will build. Students suggested items like beadwork, a carving, a dream-catcher or the Grand Ronde flag. Whatever they decide, it needs to weigh one pound or less, Reeves said.

The next meeting, held on Thursday, April 6, was the next step to agree on what artifact to send. Students decided to send up a small carved canoe paddle with either Chinuk Wawa words or the Grand Ronde Tribal logo burned into the wood.

In addition to the artifact, there will be a plastic box full of circuit boards and colored wires that must

be assembled and sent up with the balloon to track and monitor its progress.

Barry and Reeves said that part will be a learning process for everybody.

“We’re obviously not scientists,” Barry said. “This thing is completely foreign, we have no idea how to put this thing together.”

The balloon also will carry a camera smaller than a deck of cards.

“The idea is that that there will be pictures of it against the eclipse,” Reeves said.

When the balloon is ready to launch, students and chaperones will drive to Central Oregon and camp overnight on Sunday, Aug. 20.

Reeves said the planning is a little tight because the eclipse falls immediately after Contest Powwow weekend.

“It’s not like we could have said, ‘Well we don’t want it to happen that weekend,’” Reeves said. “Some of the kids that we have signed up dance at powwow, so they’ll probably have to leave Sunday evening.”

Shortly after 10 a.m. Monday, Aug. 21, students will release their balloons. The artifacts will be returned if they can be recovered, but all the students will receive photos from the launch.

Even though it took some urging to get students signed up this far in advance, Barry said he thinks the reality of the event will affect them in a big way.

“I think once the event happens and the kids go through the entire experience, that they’re going to be wowed by the whole thing,” Barry said. “It doesn’t come around every year; it’s like once in a lifetime.” ■

PRESENTS
SING
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SETH MACFARLANE • TORI KELLY
JOHN C. REILLY • TARON EGERTON
SCARLETT JOHANSSON

AUDITIONS BEGIN

ILLUMINATION

April 28th, 2017, 6:00pm, CTGR Tribal Gym
Join us for Family Movie Night. If you have any questions call Shannon Stanton (503) 879-1489
Thank you for respecting our Grand Ronde Community & Culture by not displaying gang affiliation and by not bringing drugs, alcohol, or weapons to this event.

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