

Youth involvement is encouraged

**FIRST FOODS continued
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tinue traditions. We want the youth to have as many opportunities as possible to connect with the food and the land.”

Ambrose is in her second year chairing the First Foods event, which will be held at achaf-hammi, the Tribe’s plankhouse, on Saturday, June 2. The 2018 celebration of Tribal foods from pre-contact to post-Reservation will include deer, elk, lamprey, salmon, fruits, roots, yampa and Indian tea.

In an effort to increase youth involvement, food gathering activities with Cultural Education Coordinator Jordan Mercier have been offered to prepare for the celebration.

“We want our youth to help prepare more for the event,” Ambrose said. “There is an appreciation for something you gathered yourself.”

Festivities will start at 11 a.m. with Jeremy Ojua of the Tribe’s Natural Resources Department speaking about the Native Plant Propagation Program, which began to give Native youth and community members the opportunity to learn more about culturally significant plants, such as camas, onion, milkweed and tarweed.

A meal will be served at approximately noon followed by a Native plant identification or cleanup activity, which will begin at 2 p.m. and end by 4.

Ambrose has been involved in the First Foods Celebration for the past three years.

“I got involved when I started at the Grand Ronde Food Bank,” she says. “We were encouraged to support this and provide items like celery, carrots and potatoes, so the organizers could focus on the foods. ... The ultimate goal now is to get a seed shed started so we can have a healthy



Smoke Signals file photos

Tribal Elder Faye Smith makes fry bread during the First Foods Celebration held at achaf-hammi, the Tribal plankhouse, last June. This year’s First Foods Celebration will be held at achaf-hammi on Saturday, June 2.

stock of our first foods.”

Last year was Ambrose’s first organizing the celebration. She jokes that consistent meeting attendance is a good way to find yourself chairing a committee.

“The goal of our celebration is to provide staple items, but present them in new and various ways,” she says. “Maybe you don’t like baked salmon, but you’ll like salmon cakes. It is also about telling stories of why the food is important. For me, it was about harvesting bitterroot with my grandma. It was more important to her than me going to school. Telling those stories and making sure the next generation is invested is key.”

Ambrose says that events that feature food and fun are easy ways to connect people in a non-intimidating environment.

“Some youth in our community are more active in the (food) gathering days and in preparing and eating it,” Ambrose says. “For a child to hear another child say, ‘I eat this and it’s good’ helps other youth to get involved. These are all family-friendly events. Bring your children and bring your parents.”

Tribal Council Vice Chair Chris Mercier and self-proclaimed “food dude” says that the First Foods Celebration is important because many Tribal people have health

issues related to eating a Western diet, something that is far removed from traditional foods.

“It isn’t practical to go 100 percent back to what we had before, but events like this make it more available to people so they can try it out,” he says. “We had a great turnout last year.”

Attendees also are encouraged to bring a First Foods potluck dish to the celebration and share why it is important to their family.

“I like seeing people connect with their culture and history,” Ambrose says. “They are passing something on from generation to generation.”

She says that when people get involved in food gathering and preparation activities, the act of consumption is much more meaningful. As a child growing up in Yakima, Ambrose used to become impatient when her father would take her out on gathering treks.

“I would ask, ‘How long will this take?’ And he would reply, ‘It will take as long as it needs to.’ You cannot stop by the drive thru, rush it or stomp your way through it. You just got to have patience and learn to be in the moment,” she says.

Ambrose recalls gathering trips with her grandmother where she would tell creation stories about Coyote while the two were out.

“It was an educational experience all on its own and when she would come to my school and tell the stories, I actually knew what she was talking about,” Ambrose says.

The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde are descendants of Tribes and bands from across Oregon, and Ambrose says that each region has its own foods, from the Willamette Valley to southern Oregon.

Those who are interested in attending, bringing food or volunteering at the First Foods Celebration are asked to contact Ambrose, who will connect them with the appropriate person.

“The point is to try it, and if you like it, then keep enjoying it,” she says. “First comes familiarity, then knowledge and then involvement. We are hoping people will get in with ceded lands, native plants or just continue the knowledge of what they ate and where it comes from. We are all so different and it is important to help each other.” ■



Jade Unger cooks salmon during the First Foods Celebration held at achaf-hammi last June.

Grand Ronde Housing Department



Housing Board seeks community input

The Grand Ronde Housing Board is inviting Tribal members and Tribal housing residents to provide input to assist its members in carrying out its advisory role to the Housing Department and Tribal Council regarding policy guidance. The Housing Board meets at 3 p.m. the third Thursday of each month in the Housing Department conference room, 28450 Tyee Road. Its chair is Kristy Criss-Lawson. For more information, contact the Housing Department at 503-879-2401. ■

OPB airing ‘Fort Vancouver’ documentary on May 21

Tribal Council Chairwoman Cheryle A. Kennedy and Cultural Resources Department Manager David Harrelson will be two of the featured interview subjects in “Fort Vancouver,” a new “Oregon Experience” documentary airing at 9 p.m. Monday, May 21, on Oregon Public Broadcasting.

The program will explore the history of Fort Vancouver, which served as the western headquarters for the British trading enterprise Hudson’s Bay Co. in the early 1800s. The show delves into the history of the national park and its multicultural community, as well as the changes it brought to the Pacific Northwest.

A screening of the documentary will be held at 7 p.m. Wednesday, May 16, at the Kiggins Theatre, 1011 Main St., Vancouver, Wash. It will include a showing of the half-hour special followed by a Q&A with the show’s producer and national park staff. All ages are welcome to attend.

The documentary also will be available to watch at www.opb.org/Fort-Vancouver. ■