

Winter stories

Chinuk Immersion K-5 Teacher Justine Flynn reads a story in Chinuk Wawa as Chinuk Immersion Preschool Teacher Jeff Mercier, second from right, translates into English during the Winter Story Night held in achafhammi on Thursday, Feb. 7. Those in attendance also were given a copy of the story in book form in Chinuk Wawa published by the Chinuk Language Program.



The Chinuk Language Program held a Winter Story Night in achafhammi on Thursday, Feb. 7. A story read in Chinuk Wawa and translated into English was read aloud.

Visit Smoke Signals' facebook page to see more photos



Photos by Timothy J. Gonzalez

Marie Quenelle, 8, and Ayden Ruiz, 6, follow along to a story read in Chinuk Wawa and translated into English.

Upcoming pipe replacement will help ensure safety

WATER continued from page 8

The Tribe has not had a representative serve on the seven-member Water Association Board of Directors since Public Works Coordinator John Mercier left after three years in 2012.

Also included in the draft Strategic Plan is the goal of completing a water rights legal review and the development of a memorandum for Tribal Council to approve to increase the Tribe's security over its municipal water supply.

Part of that legal review, Engineering and Public Works Manager Jesse White says, is determining if 10 Tribal irrigation water rights could ever be used for quasi-municipal purposes.

The Tribe also owns five quasi-municipal water rights that total more than 217 million gallons annually. The water is available for use by the casino and lodge, and as a possible backup supply for the Water Association should its source ever be interrupted.

The Executive Office, Tribal Attorney's Office, Public Works Department and Planning Department have been identified as the Tribal entities that will work on Tribal water issues.

Planning Director Rick George says the likelihood of the Grand Ronde Tribe acquiring its own significant water right from the state of Oregon is probably miniscule based on surface water rights



Photo by Timothy J. Gonzalez

Karl Ekstrom, manager of the Grand Ronde Community Water Association, is interviewed in his office on Thursday, Jan. 17.

downstream, but the Tribe could become more involved with the Water Association by having a representative on the board.

The Tribe also could build a storage tank that would supply Tribal residents when the Water Association issues a drinking water advisory, which it last did in October 2015 when coliform bacteria was detected. It was the seventh straight year that the Water Association detected coliform bacteria in its supply.

To resolve the issue, the Water Association used chlorine to sanitize the storage tanks. The Water

Association doesn't disinfect with chlorine or add fluoride to its water on a regular basis.

At the time, Polk County Environmental Health Supervisor Jim Solvedt said that finding coliform bacteria in rural water systems is not unusual since biomass buildup inside pipes is common.

"It's a really good source of water," he said about the Grand Ronde Community Water Association.

Mercier says his No. 1 item from a Tribal strategic planning perspective would be seeing a larger water line tie-in with the 12-inch water line that ends at the intersection

of Grand Ronde and Hebo roads, which would create a loop and improve water supplies and fire protection to úyxat Powwow Grounds and the achafhammi plankhouse off Hebo Road.

"That would improve water delivery in leaps and bounds," Mercier says.

But, he adds, the Tribe does not need to consider creating its own municipal water system because of the abundance of water provided by the Water Association.

"When we talk about water delivery and the different types of water delivery that we need for this community, we want to try to create a system that's just safe for our users," Mercier says. "What that really means to us is just working together with the Water Association as we plan for our needs.

"Personally, us just working with Grand Ronde Water is my desirable. They are already structured and in place to deliver water."

Ekstrom says an upcoming pipe replacement project will help ensure the water supply's safety. The \$400,000 project will upsize 4-inch pipes near the springs and allow the Water Association to extract more water. Another project will replace a failing booster pump station near Rowell Creek.

"It'll be a safer supply, not that our current supply is unsafe. It'll just make it safer," Ekstrom says. "If you're only talking about a few hundred more homes, (water supply) should never be an issue." ■