

Native American student enrollment up in Willamina

By Paul Daquilante
Yamhill County News-Register
WILLAMINA – Native American students total 40 percent of K-12 enrollment in the Willamina School District, Superintendent Carrie Zimbrick told the school board on Monday, Feb. 11.

There are 335 Native students. By grade level, 46 percent of second-graders are Native, followed by 44 percent of fourth-graders, 47 percent of sixth-graders, 44 percent of 10th-graders and 47 percent of 11th-graders. Seventh grade ranks the lowest at 26 percent.

The Native graduation rate was 81.8 percent last year compared to 71.4 percent the previous year. Overall, the district’s 2017-18 graduation rate was 83.1 percent, a significant improvement from 69 percent in 2016-17.

“There’s been an effort to work as a whole to make major improvements,” Zimbrick said. “The district has made a commitment and the teachers have quality resources.

“There were pieces missing previously. They (instructors) were not provided with the best resources they needed to do the best job. They did not have all the professional development they needed.”

The staff shares a common education vision at the present time, Zimbrick said.

Zimbrick said she believes Native enrollment will continue to grow. The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde is expanding, she said. There are more employment opportunities and families have quality housing options on Tribal land to choose from. Combining that with education offerings from the Willamina School District and the Tribe has made it attractive for families to remain in the Grand Ronde and Willamina communities.

The Tribe is extremely supportive of its youth, Zimbrick said. There is strong representation in the Willamina district from a staffing standpoint. She recognizes that it is a strong partnership.

Zimbrick also stated the district wants to keep Tribal members who are choosing a career in education close to home, and hopes to see qualified candidates apply for teaching positions when they become available. As an example, she mentioned Justine Flynn, the liaison between the Tribe and the school board who is working toward her master’s degree in education. Zimbrick hopes she will apply for a position in the district if there is an opening that fits her.

Just two of the district’s 54 staff members are Native: high school Dean of Students Bart Baldwin and elementary school teacher Shannon Mode. ■



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Application Deadline/
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Application is available online/
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For more information contact/
Travis Stewart
travis.stewart@grandronde.org

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