

Tribal students honored with biliteracy seal

By Danielle Frost

Smoke Signals staff writer

Three Grand Ronde Tribal members have become the first to earn a biliteracy seal from Gov. Kate Brown's office for proficiency in Chinuk Wawa by the time they completed high school.

The trio of students are 2019 Willamina High School graduates Kaleb Reid, Kailiyah Krehbiel and Jordan Reyes, who will all be honored with certificates and sticker seals.

"This is pretty cool," said Reid, 19, when contacted about the award by *Smoke Signals*. "That really brightens my day a little."

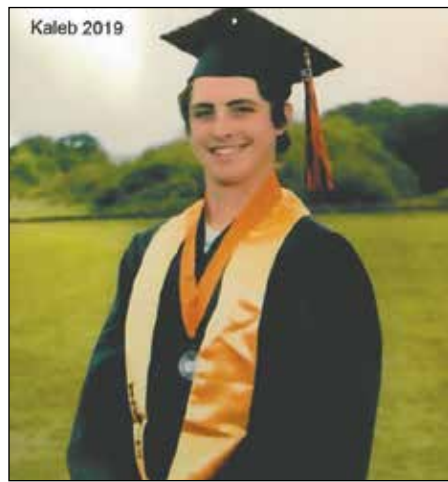
Reid took two years of Chinuk Wawa and enjoyed learning his Native language and speaking to others in the language.

"Having those conversations with classmates is fun," he said.

The biliteracy seal program began in 2015 and started originally to honor the heritage language students spoke at home that they brought to their English language school experience, according to Oregon Department of Education Program Specialist Taffy Carlisle. The program has evolved to also honor the world languages native English speakers learned.

Since 2015, the number of students who have earned the biliteracy seal has burgeoned from 350 students to 2,727 students in 2019.

Getting Native American languages recognized with the biliteracy seal is the product of almost three years of working with the government-to-government education cluster and being invited to share the biliteracy seal program with language program



Kaleb Reid

administrators for several of the nine federally recognized Tribes in Oregon, Carlisle said.

"This could only be made possible with Tribal language revitalization programs building and growing so well," she said. "It is an honor to recognize AI/AN (American Indian/Alaskan Native) students in this way."

Tribal Librarian and Chinuk Wawa instructor Kathy Cole is one of those whom Carlisle shared the program information with and encouraged her to award eligible students.

"I test my students with written, comprehensive and oral exams so I knew they had achieved the level of proficiency required for the biliteracy seal," Cole said. "You have to be very dedicated and it is exciting to get these students recognized. They are extra special, all three of them, and are great role models for other youth."

Krehbiel said she was excited when she received the news of receiving a biliteracy seal.



Kailiyah Krehbiel

"Wow, that is so cool," she said.

Krehbiel, 18, has been immersed in Chinuk Wawa since preschool. She also has worked in the preschool with the Tribe's Summer Youth Employment Program and as an employee in the temp pool.

"My stepmom, Ali Holsclaw, knows the language really well and I grew up with her speaking it," she said. "This is part of our culture and it's important to get it back, not just say, 'Oh, it's gone now.'"

Reyes, 19, attended the Chinuk



Jordan Reyes

Immersion Preschool and was fluent as a child, but he didn't use the language much after that until he was attending Willamina High School. There, he took three years of Chinuk Wawa and then worked as a teacher's assistant in Cole's class.

"It's my favorite part of the Tribe's culture," he said. "I've always found it interesting."

He is now attending the University at Buffalo in New York state on a wrestling scholarship. ■

Tribal Council nominations to be livestreamed on June 28

TRIBAL COUNCIL
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expire on Sept. 30.

This year's Tribal Council election will be held on Saturday, Sept. 12, because of the Labor Day holiday weekend.

As previously announced, the Sunday, June 28, General Council meeting to nominate this year's Tribal Council candidates will be held in the Governance Center Atrium instead of the Tribal Community Center.

Tribal Council nominations will be livestreamed and a meal will not be provided. Only Tribal Council members, Tribal staff, media representatives, Election Board members, nominees and those nominating them will be allowed to enter the building. All attendees will be required to wear face masks.

Tribal Council seats currently held by Chris Mercier, Michael Langley and Lisa Leno will be up for election in 2020. The three incumbents abstained from voting on the emergency amendment to the Election Ordinance.

In other action, Tribal Council:

- Approved a license agreement with Verizon that should improve cell phone reception in the area. Verizon will install and operate an antenna on the Tribally owned cell tower on Salmon River Highway opposite Spirit Mountain Casino and pay the Tribe during the five-year agreement. Verizon will join T-Mobile and Sprint in renting space on the cell tower, said Tribal Lands Manager Jan Reibach during the Tuesday, June 9, Legislative Action Committee meeting;

- Approved applying for a two-year, \$33,665 Institute of Museum and Library Services COVID-19 grant that would fund another part-time library aide to provide bookmobile services for Elders and provide eight iPads for the mobile library to loan out to patrons;
 - Approved applying for a five-year Department of Justice for Tribal Victims Services grant that would provide \$694,698 that would add an additional domestic violence advocate and pay the wages of a current advocate for an additional three years;
 - Approved purchasing Tribal Elder Ed Larsen's almost three-acre property near the intersection of Highway 22 (Hebo Road) and Grand Ronde Road. The purchase was discussed in executive session during the June 9 Legislative Action Committee hearing and a purchase price was not disclosed publicly;
 - Approved a professional services agreement not to exceed \$169,360 with GBD Architects Inc. of Portland to begin master planning the 23-acre Blue Heron Paper Mill site in Oregon City, which the Tribe purchased in August 2019 for \$15.25 million. GBD will work with Tribal Council and staff to prepare options for the property's use;
 - And approved the enrollment of two infants and one non-infant into the Tribe because they meet the enrollment requirements outlined in the Tribal Constitution and Enrollment Ordinance.
- The entire meeting can be viewed by visiting the Tribal government's website, www.grandronde.org, and then clicking on the Government tab and then Videos. ■



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