

Newly elected Tribal Council
members sworn in — pg. 11



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Tribal Council re-elects Mercier as vice chairman

By Dean Rhodes

Smoke Signals editor

Tribal Council re-elected Chris Mercier by acclamation as vice chair during its Wednesday, Sept. 16, meeting.

Tribal Council member Denise Harvey nominated Mercier and there were no other nominations.



Chris Mercier

“I consider it an honor to get to serve on Tribal Council for as long as I have and I also consider it an additional honor to be able to do the vice chair position,” he said. “I appreciate the support of my co-workers.”

Mercier, 45, was re-elected to Tribal Council for the sixth time on Saturday, Sept. 12, garnering 966 votes and finishing third behind fellow incumbents Lisa Leno and Michael Langley, respectively.

In his previous 15 years on Tribal Council, Mercier has served as Tribal Council chair for one year, vice chair for two years and secretary for one year.

In other action, Tribal Council:

- Approved an amendment with Industrial Economics, the Tribe’s technical consultant on the Portland Harbor cleanup and related natural resources damages, that extends the contract through September 2021;
- Approved 2021 harvest season licenses on 12 Tribal properties

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Photo by Timothy J. Gonzalez

Willamina High School Life Skills Instructional Assistant Lisa Myers passes out a free lunch to MJ Whitcraft, 14, in Tribal Housing on Thursday, Sept. 24. The Willamina School District is continuing to feed its students during distance-learning instruction being offered because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Distance serving

School District continues feeding students during pandemic

By Danielle Frost

Smoke Signals staff writer

WILLAMINA—It’s been almost seven months since schools closed their doors and moved to distance learning, an experiment that has been hotly debated.

As many teachers and administrators transition to another school year of virtual classrooms, discussions continue about whether, and how much, students are actually

learning.

Another important question on district leaders’ minds is how schools can continue to feed students who need free and reduced-price meals. Nationwide, more than 30 million children depend on these meals from their local schools.

In the Willamina School District, where the majority of Grand Ronde Tribal students attend classes, more than 95 percent of students overall

are eligible for free and reduced-price lunches.

All Willamina schools operate under the Community Eligibility Provision, a non-priced meal service option for schools and districts in low-income areas. All students can eat meals at no charge under the National School Lunch Program, according to Willamina Nutrition Ser-

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Help is available for Tribal members affected by fires

By Danielle Frost

Smoke Signals staff writer

If you are a Tribal member who has been affected by the recent and numerous Oregon wildfires, there are different ways to obtain assistance.

The Tribe has set up a help line number, 541-921-5345, so that Tribal members who have been evacuated or had their homes damaged can be assisted or connected with additional resources.

“The best plan is for people to call the help line if they are in need of shelter so we can help develop a plan as well as meet other needs,” Social Services Manager Dana Ainam said. “We

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encourage those needing immediate or long-term resources to call the national Red Cross number (800-733-2767) to get registered.”

Eleven separate wildfires broke out in Oregon just after Labor Day and affected most of the state, from the Slater fire in Josephine County

to the Lionshead fire west of Warm Springs to the Echo Mountain Complex Fire west of Grand Ronde in Lincoln County.

Ainam has been in contact with approximately 20 families that have been displaced. A local donation system has not been set up yet, but it is being discussed.

Ainam said that Tribal members should continue checking the Tribe’s Facebook page on a regular basis, as resources and information are being updated frequently.

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