

Conferencing app has seen a Zoom boom during pandemic

By Danielle Frost
Smoke Signals staff writer

Zoom has been described as everything from innovative and dynamic to Skype on steroids.

In the year of social distancing, lockdowns and working from home, the video-conferencing tool also has become one of the most frequently downloaded apps in the world.

Zoom can be used on desktops, laptops, tablets and smart phones, and allows users to meet online, with or without video.

Zoom users can choose to record meetings, collaborate on projects and share or comment on each other's screens, all with a platform that is relatively user-friendly. It's also free for meetings of up to 40 minutes with 100 participants. Paid plans range from \$150 to \$200 per year.

Government agencies in the United States and worldwide have been using Zoom to communicate and continue conducting business during the pandemic, including the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde employees, various Tribal committees and Tribal Council. Tribal Council also uses Facebook Live to host informative meetings.

For the Tribe, after the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic erupted in mid-March, it had to cancel the regularly scheduled April General Council meeting in Eugene. However, by the time the May General Council meeting came around, Zoom was in the Tribe's toolbox and approximately 70 Tribal members attended the virtual meeting. A quorum requires 30 Tribal members in attendance.

Tribal Council Vice Chair Chris Mercier, who recently graduated from Lewis & Clark Law School, had some experience using video conferencing apps before the pandemic began.

"I like the convenience of Zoom and it's pretty easy to use," he says. "It can be a little intimidating at first, but once you get confidence, it's easy to do. When in-person classes were canceled due to the pandemic, I had to learn use it."

What is it?

Zoom was founded in 2011 by Eric Yuan, who emigrated from China to the United States. Zoom was publicly launched in January 2013. Before founding Zoom, Yuan had helped to build WebEx, a web conferencing and videoconferencing application. It was founded in 1995 and taken over by Cisco Systems in 2007.

In the second quarter of 2020, Zoom joined Pokémon GO and TikTok as the only apps to be installed more than 300 million times in a single quarter, according to Business of Apps. In January 2020, there were 56,000 downloads per day, but just two months later at the height of worldwide lockdowns, Zoom was downloaded 2.13 million times in one day.

Zoom is now the second most overall downloaded app worldwide in 2020, according to startuptalky.com. It ranks first in the Apple Store, followed by TikTok and YouTube. For Google Play users, Zoom ranks third, bested by TikTok and WhatsApp.

Zoom has been used by approximately 90,000 schools in 20 countries during the COVID-19 outbreak to teach remotely, with Zoom removing the 40-minute time limit for free meetings for teachers.

The United Kingdom's cabinet also was among new users of the app in 2020, with a memorable "oops" Zoom moment widely circulated on the Internet: One member's cat decided to repeatedly walk across his keyboard during a meeting and was told, "Rocco, put your

tail down," much to the amusement of fellow participants.

Benefits of technology

Mercier says the benefits of using Zoom as a Tribal Council member are the ability for all council members to participate, especially if they are immune compromised or if family needs during the pandemic require their attention at home. It also has helped increase participation from the membership in General Council meetings, which are occasionally challenging for out-of-town Tribal members to attend in person.

"It doesn't quite match the in-person conversation and everyone's skills are at different levels," Mercier says. "It can be distracting seeing what is going on in the background on the screens, but it is well-suited to school and work."

Mercier, who lives in Grand Ronde, tries to ensure he is in his Tribal Council office when conducting business Zoom meetings.

"I've seen people's animals come in to 'visit' the meetings," he says. "My cats have no qualms about coming in and sitting on the keyboard."

He sees Zoom as continuing to be utilized at the Tribe after the pandemic subsides and life returns somewhat to normal.

"Now that we've started using it, it's hard to stop it," he says. "However, there could be issues with quorum at General Council meetings if people aren't using live video and walk away to do something else."

Another issue is that Zoom depends on a strong Internet connection, which can sometimes be challenging in Grand Ronde.

"There are aspects of Zoom that

can never replace in-person communication, but I like that it gives Tribal members a chance to participate more," Mercier says.

Tribal Communications Director Sara Thompson says the Tribe will continue to utilize Zoom in the future.

"The pandemic has shown us how platforms like Zoom can be an effective tool for connecting with Tribal members no matter where they live," she says. The Tribe has members living in more than 40 states and several foreign countries.

"Our goal is to continue that by finding ways to integrate the platform into meetings whenever, and wherever, possible," Thompson says.

Tribal Council member Denise Harvey points out that Zoom has allowed employees to stay home due to schools being closed or because they are immune compromised, and still be able to actively participate in work meetings.

It also has allowed Tribal managers to continue conducting monthly meetings with General Manager David Fullerton without having to gather in a meeting room and the Tribe's Editorial Board, which supervises *Smoke Signals'* editor, has continued meeting monthly using Zoom.

"Zoom meetings and all other forms of telecommunications have been very helpful," Harvey says. "We are able to continue to do our work as needed while remaining safe during this pandemic. It's also helped with traffic on the highways and parents having to be home with their children who are not able to attend school. It's been a bit of a learning curve, but I think we've all learned a lot about different technologies and have adapted well." ■



Self Care in the Changing Times

Friday, October 23, 2020
Via Zoom
1:00 pm – 3:00 pm

Join Zoom Meeting
www.zoom.us
Meeting ID: 874 2945 1514
Passcode: 267710
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87429451514?pwd=dFZHZDU4bEU1dUQ4S2EzUmg0OXhUT09>

Please feel welcome to log in and connect with others in the community, learn some self care tools, laugh, check-in and leave feeling uplifted.

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Facilitated by the Native Wellness Institute
www.NativeWellness.com

mayka tiki chaku- kəmtəks chinuk wawa?

Do you want to learn chinuk wawa?

The chinuk wawa language program will be offering weekly virtual "wawa workshops" for Tribal employees and community members!

Join us:

- Monday
- 12pm - 1pm
- October 19th
- Via Zoom

For more information or if you would like to sign up, please contact Zoey Holsclaw 503-879-1443 or zoey.holsclaw@grandronde.org

