

Tribe remembers the missing and murdered

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dered Indigenous people with ties to Oregon, was held. Additionally, informational posters and laminated cards containing phrases such as “women are sacred” and “no more stolen sisters” were placed nearby.

Warriors of Hope Program Manager Danielle Murrell thanked the approximately 70 people gathered for attending.

“Thanks for coming here today to honor and memorialize the missing and murdered Indigenous people,” Murrell said. “I also want to thank the staff from the Warriors of Hope program because these are the people who are doing the hard work each and every day, serving our community, and victims and survivors of domestic and sexual violence.”

Tribal member Bobby Mercier gave the opening prayer and then he and Tribal member Travis Stewart performed a drum song.

May 5 has officially marked the national day of awareness since 2017 when two Montana senators, Steve Daines and Jon Tester, introduced a resolution recognizing it in response to the murder of Hanna Harris on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation and other abductions and killings of Native women across the United States, according to the National Indigenous Women’s Resource Center.

Since then, there have been events at the local, regional, national and international level to call attention to and address the crisis. “These efforts are as varied as the Indian Nations where they are being organized,” the website states. “The silence of tolerance and inaction is being challenged.”

Murrell said that the day brings attention to the tragic epidemic of disproportionately high rates of disappearances and murders among Native people. She shared some sobering statistics with the crowd.

“According to the National Institute of Justice, more than four in five American Indian and Alaska Native women have experienced sexual violence in their lifetime,” she said. “The murder rate of Native American women living on Reservations is 10 times higher than



Photos by Kamiah Koch

Former Tribal Council member Tonya Gleason-Shepek, a cousin of Heather (Haller) Cameron, gives beaded necklaces to Tribal members Sydney Clark and Dorene Gillespie for their support in raising awareness for Cameron's case during the Missing and Murdered Indigenous People recognition event held on Friday, May 5, in the Governance Center Atrium.

the national average. American Indian and Alaska men also have high rates of experiencing violence in their lifetimes.”

Murrell shared a personal story of loss, her voice shaking with emotion at times.

“In 2008, my cousin Lisa was murdered by an alleged dating partner and she left behind two young children,” she said. “We don’t think that’s going to happen here until it does. This can happen to anyone. This could be your mother, sister, brother, cousin or any relative you have. ... You might

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hear the frustration in my voice and the anger because we should be angry. You should be mad. This isn’t anything new. It’s been going on for hundreds of years and we’re only talking about it now, and it’s not OK. When does it end?”

Tribal Council member Denise Harvey talked about the need to keep awareness alive.

“That’s how we get through this,”



Oregon Department of Human Services Indian Child Welfare Act worker Amanda Loveless turns to show her red paint handprint to her colleagues outside the Governance Center.



Tribal Council member Denise Harvey shares a hug with Warriors of Hope Program Manager Danielle Murrell before speaking during the Missing and Murdered Indigenous People recognition event.

Harvey said. “Years back, this was a pretty silent issue and nobody really talked about it much and nobody paid much attention to (Native people). And it’s because of us and the young people who have brought it forward, making the awareness and getting something done so we can have the programs that we have today to help protect our communities from murder and violence.”

Harvey recalled marching in a Washington, D.C., protest in 2018 with thousands of other Indigenous people from across the country.

“It was so powerful,” she said. “It was freezing that day and snowing. There’s freezing rain and still 8,000 people marched to the Capitol. We all had our signs and our Tribal flags and nobody really cared about the freezing cold. We had a mission to do. We were going to make our voices heard and that’s what we did.”

Former Tribal Council member Tonya Gleason-Shepek spoke about her cousin, Heather (Haller) Cameron, who will have been missing 11 years on Aug. 18. She disappeared from a remote area of Shasta County, Calif., under suspicious circumstances.

“Heather was 28 years old and left behind three small children,” Gleason said. “She had made several 911 calls saying that a man named Daniel Lusby (her ex-boyfriend) had drugged her and taken her to the mountains, and was going to kill her. Two weeks later, she was finally reported as a missing person by her (estranged) husband. There were a couple of searches done, but the only thing we were ever able to find was her EBT card and we feel that area is probably where she lost her life. We don’t know what happened because she has never been found. ... It’s hard for me and it’s been hard for our whole family.”

Lusby was interviewed at least three times by the Shasta County Sheriff’s Office and remains a person of interest in the case, but has never been arrested.

When she finished talking, Shepek gifted beaded necklaces to Tribal members Sydney Clark and Dorene Gillespie for their support in raising awareness for Cameron’s case.

Tribal member Naomi Cardinal, who is Cameron’s aunt, talked about how her niece’s disappearance didn’t seem to be taken seriously by law enforcement or Tribal Council at the time.

“Like Tonya, I am grateful for the new awareness and attitude ... but we can do better,” she said.

Cardinal talked about two banners that the family created after receiving a donation from the Tribe: One will remain in Grand Ronde and the other will be held during an MMIP parade in Shasta Lake City, near where Cameron disappeared almost 11 years ago.

“This will help keep Heather’s name and face in the public eye,” she said. “We have not forgotten Heather and somebody knows something. We continue to pray for answers. ... Please help us bring Heather back home.” ■