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Snowstorm shutter Tribal campus for three days

By Sherron Lumley
Smoke Signals staff writer

Winter weather arrived in Grand Ronde with snow, wind and freezing rain shuttering the Tribal campus from Tuesday, Jan. 16, through Thursday, Jan. 18. Monday, Jan. 15, was a Tribal holiday in honor of Martin Luther King Jr. Day so offices were already closed. The National Weather Service issued several flash freeze warnings ahead of the storm, predicting temperatures plummeting to below freezing and dangerous black ice for Yamhill County and most of Oregon. With this advance notice, Tribal leadership made the decision to dismiss staff two hours

early on Friday, Jan. 12, so they could get home safely. By Saturday, a blanket of snow enveloped the hills and valley, soon followed by freezing rain that created a hard, glassy layer of ice, falling trees and treacherous roads. The Tribe was ready with its Emergency Operations Plan, which covers all areas of response. Tribal Emergency Preparedness Coordinator Brandy Bishop kept in touch with the state Office of Emergency Management and the National Weather Service, conveying the information to the Tribal Interim General Manager Chris Leno. See SNOWSTORM continued on page 9



Photo by Sherron Lumley

Tribal Groundskeeper Nick Colton clears snow in a parking lot on the Tribal campus on Thursday, Jan. 18. Tribal offices were closed for three days in a row due to a snow and ice storm that affected the Willamette Valley area. Initially, the plan was to open offices at 10 a.m. Thursday, Jan. 18, but that was changed after the Willamina and Sheridan school districts closed for the day, and the conditions of the less-traveled roads were taken into consideration.

Tribal construction projects underway

By Sherron Lumley
Smoke Signals staff writer

Several construction projects that will serve Tribal members are underway or nearing completion in Grand Ronde, from a modern health care clinic with a community kitchen and fish pit to solar-powered Elder housing and a new child development center. “The visions that we put down on paper are now being realized,” Tribal Council Chairwoman Cheryle A. Kennedy said during a December Facebook Live meeting. “We can welcome home our members.” On a rainy January morning, Tribal Engineering and Planning Manager Ryan Webb walked through the new health care and vaccination clinic, located near the Tribal campus entrance. “Seeing each project come to life and then ultimately be used to provide a service to the membership is so rewarding,” Webb said. He discussed several of the Tribe’s current projects, noting its success in securing federal and other grant funding to partially finance every project, up to 100 percent of the cost in some cases. His team in Public Works includes Grant Program Manager Wendy Sparks, Grant Writer Stevie Geopfert and Grants Assistant



Photo by Michelle Alaimo

Tribal Council Chairwoman Cheryle A. Kennedy, left, speaks during the open house and blessing for Creekside Elder Housing on Wednesday, Jan. 24. Standing with Kennedy are Tribal Council member Denise Harvey, second from left, Tribal Council Secretary Michael Cherry, third from left, and Tribal Council member Brenda Tuomi.

“Seeing each project come to life and then ultimately be used to provide a service to the membership is so rewarding.”

~ Tribal Engineering and Planning Manager Ryan Webb

Dana Morfin.
Health care and vaccination clinic: Located next to the Tribe’s

Health & Wellness Center, construction is expected to be complete by early February on the \$7.1 mil-

lion project. Funding includes \$2.2 million from Indian Health Service, \$1.75 million from the Indian Community Development Block Grant, \$100,000 from Spirit Mountain Community Fund, \$50,000 from Yamhill Community Care and \$3 million from clinic revenues. During a recent site visit, Webb pointed out architectural features such as indoor fir beams combined with exterior cedar salvaged from the 2020 Detroit Lake wildfire. The 8,400-square-foot interior includes a reception area with vaulted ceiling and children’s play area, spacious medical and dental exam rooms, high-tech labs, a break room and administrative offices. Copper acorns catch rainwater as salmon stamped in the concrete appear to swim toward the 800-square-foot concrete patio and a covered, 700-square-foot fish pit area. The community kitchen is set up to accommodate streaming nutrition classes with offsite Tribal members. The Tribe hired contractor Triplett Wellman Inc. of Woodburn for this contract. **Child development center:** Construction began in December

See PROJECTS continued on pages 8-9