

# square feet of office, classroom space

tection Agency Brownfield Grant and \$2 million from Congress, earmarked for the first block of development: Water Avenue, Fourth Street and Main Street.

The Tribe has a work plan formed with the EPA and Oregon Department of Environmental Quality. Construction is due to start this summer.

“For the EPA Brownfield Grant, we will continue to complete environmental remediation tasks under our work plan with EPA and Oregon DEQ,” Webb said. “This work will likely include continued subsurface investigation work as well as removal of (contamination) from underlying soils. For the congressional funding grant, we are currently designing the infrastructure and utilities for phase one of site redevelopment work.”

**Language education building:** The \$3.95 million, 6,600-square-foot building has six classrooms with doors that open to nature, office space, a break room, restrooms and an outdoor play area.

It is located behind the existing Education Department complex on the Tribal campus and was paid for through a combination of Tribal, federal and grant funding.

The chinuk wawa skul opened in the fall while the building was



**A truckload of gravel is dumped during construction of the child development center on the Tribal campus on Thursday, Jan. 25. Construction on the 26,000-square-foot building, located next to the Tribal gym, began in December 2023 and is expected to take a year.**

receiving a few finishing touches. Construction is now complete and students ages 3 to 11 attend language immersion classes. Parent and community language classes will be explored in 2024. ■

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## Fire Department picked up some staff to get them to essential jobs

### SNOWSTORM continued from front page

“We have shelter plans in place, which include the gym and Elder Activity Center,” Bishop said. “They were not activated because there was no power loss, but we always have them ready. We are geared to take care of the whole community with Tribal warming shelters for our Tribal population. We make an effort to get out to Elder Housing and partner with Facilities to take care of the needs of Elders, such as clearing snow and ice or delivering meals if needed.”

She added that the Tribal Fire Department picked up some staff members to get them to their essential jobs at the Adult Foster Care lodges.

Emergency Services Chief Steve Warden said there were “very few” serious incidents because of several advance warnings of the impending storm.

“There were no exposure cases here from people being out in the cold, and it was remarkable that people were driving slowly and carefully and there was no huge spike in accidents,” he said.

Beginning in the pre-dawn hours on Thursday, Jan. 18, Tribal Facilities employees worked to clear walkways around buildings and removed snow from parking lots.

However, with a light snow continuing to fall and large chunks of ice sliding off the roof of the Tribal Governance Center, the planned two-hour delay was



Photo by Sherron Lumley

**Snow is piled around the Governance Center parking lot at the Tribal campus on Thursday, Jan. 18.**

extended to include office closures for the entire day.

Leno thanked the entire maintenance team and security in an email Thursday, for working so diligently in removing snow and ice from the Tribal campus.

“Preparing (the) campus has been a challenge...but I want to put out a special thank you to all of those that have worked so diligently this morning to try and accommodate a 10 a.m. opening,” he said. “Kudos to the entire maintenance team, including security. Hopefully their work will lead to better conditions when we return to work tomorrow.”

Throughout the duration of the Tribal campus closure, a few employees either braved the bad roads or never left work at all. Tribal Security Supervisor Roel Hernandez stayed onsite throughout the storm, sleeping only briefly at the Elder Activity Center.

“I decided to stay here to make

sure we have enough coverage for everyone,” he said. “I’m very proud of my staff being able to come in and work.”

Finance department staff also came in despite offices being closed. With payday looming on Friday, Jan. 19, Payroll Administrator Michelle Peterson, Assistant Controller Trish Squires, and Staff Accountants Casey Case and Shereena Bates made the trek into the office. “We really do care that everyone gets paid on time to be able to buy groceries and pay bills,” Peterson said, who navigated her Ford Bronco over downed trees to reach Grand Ronde from Falls City.

By Friday morning, Jan. 19, road conditions were greatly improved as the big melt began.

Thanks to Thursday’s plow work, by Friday morning the parking lots and Tribal campus roads were cleared of all snow and ice.

“We started at 6:50 a.m. to clear the walkways and parking lots for people,” Tribal Groundskeeper Nick Colton said Thursday.

Wearing an orange hoodie as his only protection against the elements, four hours later he was still plowing the parking lots, removing large amounts of snow and ice buildup.

The Tribe’s AlertSense system

texted employees campus closure updates throughout the week after emails were sent out.

Telecommunications Administrator Mark Scheeler said it’s normal for a slight delay to occur between the two, since the alert is created only after the information about delays and closures becomes available and is approved by Tribal Council.

Meanwhile, Spirit Mountain Casino, led by Chief Executive Officer Camille Mercier, remained open to the public with some employees staying in the lodge rather than risk driving the hazardous roads.

“With the adverse weather challenges, Spirit Mountain overcame operational challenges thanks to our team members’ hard work and dedication,” she said. “Spirit Mountain provided lodging to our team members, ensuring their safety while keeping the property open to those seeking food, shelter and comfort.”

Oregon Gov. Tina Kotek declared a state of emergency on Thursday, Jan. 18, after the storm left a wake of widespread damage, power outages and the death of at least 13 people.

“Now we are heeding the call from additional counties to escalate,” she said.

A low temperature of 15 degrees was recorded in Grand Ronde on Saturday, Jan. 13. By Monday, Jan 15, the high was 30 degrees locally, and by Friday, Jan. 19, morning temperatures remained above freezing and most employees returned to campus. ■