

Tribally-operated school will open to students Aug. 26

By Katherine Warren
Smoke Signals staff

After many years, a dream has come to fruition for some Grand Ronde Tribal members: Their own school.

The first day of the new, Tribally-operated school will be Monday, Aug. 26, with the kindergarten class. First through fifth graders will start Tuesday, Sept. 3.

Although this has been discussed for several years, concerted efforts to open the school began in the spring and have been ongoing since.

On July 2, Education Department Manager Angela Fasana; Curriculum Specialist Cheyanne Fasana-Heidt and Shawash Academic Teacher Adam Langley sat down with Tribal Council to give an update about where they were at with Tribally-operated school.

Fasana-Heidt shared that they were getting ready to do interviews for a math and science teacher and were hoping to have someone hired by the end of the month.

The next update involved curriculum development. As of July, 24 of 40 lessons for literacy were completed. To put this in the sense of a school year, curriculum is completed through January.

Literacy and health curriculum was created by Education Department employees and math/science are from outside sources. Math is from Discover Wild Learning and titled, “Wild Math.” Science is from Science Through Nature and is titled, “A Year Discovery” and those were translated into Chinuk Wawa.

The math/science program is nature/outdoor based on the seasonal round model and includes hands-on activities.

In early August, Fasana, Fasana-Heidt and Chinuk Wawa Education Program Manager Justine Flynn sat down with

Tribal Council to give another update.

Fasana-Heidt shared with them that a math and science teacher had been hired and was developing weekly assignments.

“We are back to the drawing board about whether or not to hire a special ed assistant or teacher,” she said.

The last staff that they have hired as of right now is a physical education/health coach.

On the curriculum front, 32 of the 40 lessons for literacy will be finalized on Aug. 21, according to Fasana-Heidt.

Health, math, social studies and science are in the process of being translated into Chinuk Wawa. Literacy and science will include opportunities for the other subjects to be blended in as well.

One of the questions that was asked by Tribal Council was who is doing the translations of the curriculum. Fasana-Heidt shared that it’s a combination of people such as herself, Flynn, Langley and others.

The next update that was shared was for policies and procedures, which are more than 75% done and have been approved. Six policies have been drafted and under review with the committee, before being finalized and submitted to the Tribe’s legal department as well as the general manager.

The final item that was talked about was becoming a charter school or local education agency, which means the Tribe becoming its own school district.

Fasana shared with Tribal Council that she is looking at whether it’s possible to become a local education agency and what that would look like.

For more information about the Tribally-operated school, contact Flynn at Justine.flynn@grandronde.org. ■

Tribe has a mobilization plan in place for extreme weather

FIRE continued from front page

some 5,000 acres after a lightning storm the first weekend in August set it off, along with several other fires.

Across the state, according to the Oregon Department of Forestry, 33 fires were burning in Oregon, and 1.38 million acres have burned so far this year. More than 80% of the fires have been caused by people, the department said.

The Oregonian newspaper reported on Aug. 7 that there were five megafires burning in the state, defined as fires larger than 100,000 acres.

Grand Ronde Natural Resources Department Manager Colby Drake said that the Fire Protection Program hires between 30 to 40 seasonal employees who help fill fire crews and engines during fire season.

“During times like now, when we are in a national preparedness level five (the highest), we try to make sure our resources (engines and hand crew) are available for national dispatch to assist with project fires across the country,” he said.

At the same time, Drake said, “Locally, we will conduct daily and weekend fire patrols with our engines depending on the weather and fire indices (indexes) which include fuel moisture levels and humidity recoveries across the area.”

For efficiency, the department coordinates daily with the Oregon Department of Forestry’s Dallas office on resource availability and patrols.

“ODF sets the industrial fire precaution levels related to forestry practices on the Reservation and our forested lands, which NRD staff will help enforce,” he said.

The Tribe also has a mobilization plan in place for extreme fire weather and red flag warnings, such as shutting down all forest operations when relative humidities dip below 30%.

“Our fire protection staff also coordinate with the fire department staff on resources and patrols to make sure we have good coverage of the area,” Drake said. “Typically, the duty officer will make sure staff are available for local response as needed and will keep other NRD staff informed of fire related information.”

The department backfills the positions of deployed firefighters to ensure there’s still coverage at home, Walters said.

“This coverage often means that our staff (are) working overtime (more than the 48 consecutive hours they normally work),” she said. “During these periods we ensure the crews have as much rest time as calls allow, crews stay hydrated, and we restore apparatus immediately when returning from calls or deployments to ensure they are ready for the next need.”

Pre-fire season preparedness includes vehicle and tool maintenance, training to ensure staff are well-versed in wildland firefighting skills and increasing staff levels during the weekend when administrative staff are not on duty.

“Another huge portion of our preparation includes public education about prevention and mitigation,” Walters said. “We encourage people to keep defensible space around their homes, be vigilant about vehicle maintenance and limiting (if not eliminating) the use of spark emitting devices.”

Defensible space means having an area around the home that is clear of fire hazards such as bark mulch, fir needles, deadwood and other debris. It entails keeping gutters, decks and fences clean so that flammable items like dried leaves and fir needles don’t build up, storing barbecue tanks at least 30 feet away from the house and keeping driveways clear for first responders.

More information is available by calling Tribal Resiliency Officer Kaylene Barry at 503-879-1701. ■



We are excited to announce our new Defensible Space Program!

This program is aimed to help our community reduce potential impacts of wildfire. We will be educating the community on actions that help prepare their homes and properties from the threat of fire. We will also be offering free defensible space home assessments and mitigation services to qualifying properties! Evaluations and recommendations are available to assist property owners in strengthening their defensible spaces.

As the threat of wildfire increases each year, so does the importance of spreading information on how to protect and enhance the resilience of yourself, your home, and property. Reach out today for more information.

For more information please reach out to:

Grand Ronde Emergency Services - 503-879-3473
Kaylene Barry - kaylene.barry@grandronde.org

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