



Spring Break  
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# SMOKE SIGNALS

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## Chris Cherry acquitted of public safety ordinance violation

By Nicole Montesano  
*Smoke Signals staff writer*

**T**ribal Court Chief Judge Patrick Melendy acquitted former Spirit Mountain Casino Marketing Manager Chris Cherry of violating a Tribal ordinance prohibiting use of Tribal resources to solicit or distribute election campaign materials after a 1.5-hour trial Wednesday, March 19.

“The court’s finding is that the Tribe hasn’t met its burden on this,” Melendy said in his ruling.

In mid-August 2024, Cherry was cited under the Tribal Public Safety Ordinance for violating its campaign provision, which bars using Tribal resources to solicit or distribute campaign materials. It carried a maximum penalty of a \$50 fine, had he been convicted.

The ordinance violation was civil, not criminal, in nature.

Three weeks later, it was announced that Cherry was no longer employed by the casino. The incident took place during the campaign season, when Cherry’s wife, then Tribal Council Secretary Michael Cherry, was running for re-election. Chris Cherry testified that he had made three attempts to print a smaller copy of a campaign banner on his work computer, to try to figure out why it was failing to print for the vendor.

“We don’t believe he distributed or solicited,” Defense Attorney Dori Brattain told Melendy. “He was simply correcting a font type issue. It was no different than people who bring up recipes on Google and print them out.”

Chris Cherry testified that Michael Cherry never directed him to produce any campaign materials

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Smoke Signals file photo

**Tribal Elder Lorene Smith watches dancers during the 40th Restoration Powwow at Spirit Mountain Casino’s Event Center in November 2023.**

## Eldest Tribal Elder turns 100

By Nicole Montesano  
*Smoke Signals staff writer*

**I**n her century of life, Tribal member Lorene Smith has seen a lot, and for the most part, she’s enjoyed the experience.

However, Smith doesn’t quite understand why anyone else might be interested in hearing about it.

“I’ve had an interesting life,” Smith said. “For me it was good

but it would bore somebody else.”

Her granddaughter Lorena Rivera, who was raised on Smith’s

stories, disagreed.

After turning 100 years old Wednesday, March 19, Smith is now the eldest Tribal Elder, a de-

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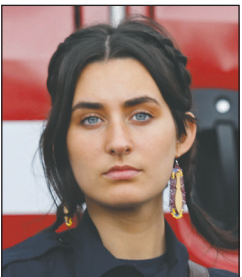
**Tribal Elder Lorene Smith turned 100 years old Wednesday, March 19.**

## Resilience Officer Kaylene Barry loves helping Tribe

By Nicole Montesano  
*Smoke Signals staff writer*

**W**hether it’s fighting wildland fires or responding to an emergency medical call, Tribal member Kaylene Barry loves being there. Anything that involves danger, action, working with people and helping her Tribe in particular, she said, is the job for her.

“I’m an Aries, a fire sign, so I’ve always been interested in things that are exciting and chal-



Kaylene Barry

lenging,” she said.

And with the advent of a new position last summer – Resilience Officer for the Tribe’s Emergency Services Department – Barry may have found the perfect job. Although she continues training to maintain her emergency medical technician rating, she said, she’s now focusing on helping Tribal members prepare for emergencies of various kinds – ice storms, heat waves, wildfires, earthquakes and so on.

“I’ve always had a desire to help my community and I’m deeply in love with my culture, so when this opportunity came along, it was like everything perfectly came together,” she said.

Barry prefers the word “resiliency” to the word “emergency.” Talking about emergencies, she said, engenders fear, while talking about resiliency puts the emphasis not on whatever bad things might happen, but on people’s ability to handle them with confidence.

“My focus is on taking away the fear of the unknown, because we know what to do,” she said.

Toward that end, she’s working with Emergency Preparedness Coordinator Brandy Bishop to design a new program; creating Tribal

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