

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Jim Burke with local news for April 13, 2022.

Jefferson County Public Health reported 17 new cases of COVID-19 yesterday. This brings our total case count, since the beginning of the pandemic, up to 3,263. There are currently 54 active cases in isolation and one Jefferson County resident is hospitalized. The two-week case rate for Jefferson County is at 208 per 100,000 as of yesterday. This case rate is now within the high transmission range, and masking indoors is once again highly recommended by public health to prevent the spread of COVID-19. For the most up to date case information, visit the Jefferson County Public Health website (<https://www.jeffersoncountypublichealth.org/1466/Case-Information>), or the Jefferson County Government Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/jeffcowagov/>).

This Thursday, April 14, the Chimacum History Group will be unveiling a special photography exhibit showcasing photographs of descendants of the Chemakum people. The Chemakum people lived in the Chimacum Creek watershed, and have been wrongly considered to be extinct and written out of history. But there are many Chemakum descendants who still live in the area today. Each summer, they hold a family gathering to honor the lives and history of their people. Last summer, photographers from the League of Extraordinary Observers (LEO) were invited to photograph the families at this event. These photos will be unveiled at Chimacum high School on Thursday from 4 to 6pm.

"We are an enduring people, and our ancestors continue in us," said Rosalee Walz of the Woodman Chemakum family. "These photographs are a powerful testament to the fact that we are very much alive and celebrate our traditions."

The Chimacum History Group is a committee of the Quimper Unitarian Universalist Fellowship's Native Connections Action Group. It is chaired by Maria Mendes and Barbara Jo Blair and includes Chemakum descendants, representatives from local churches and school districts, the Jefferson County Historical Society, Northwind Art, and other organizations. Brian Goodman was the principal photographer of this project with assistance of LEO members Tim Lawson, Robert Tognoli, and Kerry Tremain. In addition to the opening, the school will also be open for public viewing of the exhibit on Saturday, April 23, and Saturday, May 28, from noon to 2pm. For more information about this project, contact Barbara Jo Blair, co-chair of the Native Connections Group and Chimacum History Group and Quimper Unitarian Universalist Fellowship at ncagquuf@gmail.com.

Last November, Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland formally established a process to review and replace derogatory names of geographic features on federal lands. She also declared that the word beginning with "Sq—" which has historically been used to refer to Native American women to be a derogatory term and ordered the Board on Geographic Names – the federal body tasked with naming geographic places – to implement procedures to remove the term from federal usage.

This will soon take effect in Washington, as the Department of the Interior plans to rename 18 geographic features in our state, including a creek in Jefferson County and a creek in Clallam County. The public comment period on the Department's proposal closes on April 25. Washington's Committee on Geographic Names sent a letter this week supporting the plan to rename the features, but also raising concerns about the department's short timeline that may limit public and tribal involvement in the renaming process.

“Each of these derogatory placenames represents the life or lives of Indigenous women, a population which is significantly under-represented in historical commemorations,” the committee wrote. “In the process of removing a derogatory name, we must not erase these women from our landscape. We believe that a diligent effort must be made to identify the specific women or women’s activities for which these places were named, and to reflect that history in the renaming process.”

The Department of the Interior’s proposal included a list of replacement names which Washington’s Committee on Geographic Names found inappropriate. “Replacing names referring to Indigenous women with names such as ‘White,’ ‘Columbia,’ ‘Bonneville,’ and ‘Franklin Delano Roosevelt,’ as proposed in Interior’s draft replacement names list, is not an appropriate solution,” wrote the committee.

The next regular meeting of the Washington state Committee on Geographic Names is scheduled for 10am on April 26. See <https://www.dnr.wa.gov/about/boards-and-councils/board-natural-resources/committee-geographic-names#:~:text=The%20Committee%20on%20Geographic%20Names,proposals%20approved%20by%20the%20Committee> for more information on future meetings, the full text of the letter, to comment on the Department of the Interior’s proposal, and for other information.

And that’s it for today’s local news. KPTZ 91.9 FM brings you local news at noon and 5pm Monday through Thursday and at noon on Friday and Saturday. You can contact us through news@kptz.org. I’m Jim Burket. Thanks for listening.