

Hello again! This is Derek Firenze with your local news and commentary for Wednesday, September 25, 2024 beamed in from the *Jefferson County Beacon* for KPTZ 91.9FM in Port Townsend, Washington.

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Let's take a journey westward to the Hoh Tribe, where a powerful new mural is helping preserve cultural stories while shining a light on an often-overlooked community. The west side of Jefferson County, blocked by the towering Olympic Mountains, is a remote and beautiful landscape. For the Hoh Tribe, this isolation has been compounded by the long history of displacement and marginalization caused by colonization. But recently, a project has bridged that gap, using art to bring light to their rich cultural heritage.

The new mural, standing 8 feet tall and 24 feet wide, now graces the outside of the Hoh Tribal Library, thanks to the collaborative efforts of the New Old Time Chautauqua alongside Hoh Tribal members. The project first took shape during the Hoh Days celebration in June of this year, but was only installed just last week, capturing the spirit and history of the Hoh people in vivid color.

Danielle Fodor, a muralist based out of Port Townsend, worked closely with tribal elders and youth to design the mural, ensuring that it truly reflected their stories. One of the standout features is a Thunderbird with wings spanning the mural's width – an idea contributed by Hoh artist Bryan Cole, who has been preserving traditional arts like mask-making for years. Beneath the Thunderbird's wings are scenes of the Tribe's canoeing heritage, masked paddlers, and even a Sasquatch, all representing centuries of life on the coast.

Some of the elders consulted for the mural – like the Hoh's Hereditary Chief Howieshata and storyteller Vivian Lee – shared stories from their lives which carry an unbroken lineage of experience that their people have held for thousands of years. Because of their remote location, the Hoh Tribe were among the last to be affected by colonization, living in longhouses without electricity until the 1960s.

But this mural is about more than honoring the past – it's also about confronting the present and future challenges the Hoh Tribe faces, particularly the existential threat of climate change. The issue of rising sea levels is of particular significance to these coastal people. Additionally, more severe rainfall events in conjunction with rising sea levels greatly increase the flood hazard to the village. To adapt, the Tribe is relocating their village with a plan stretching over the next 100 and 500 years. Their plan consists of multiple stages, and after completion, the existing Hoh Village on the Reservation would be abandoned and decommissioned.

In a very literal way, these stories were carried by the mural from the past to the future. The physical work of painting the panels was done in the old Tribal Center, which is no longer in use because of its location in a floodplain. The panels were then carried up to the higher ground of the library.

In addition to the mural, Chautauqua volunteers did maintenance on elders' yards, built carts to help them transport their belongings, and taught guitar lessons to youth before giving away 17 guitars that had been donated for the project. The mural now stands as a testament to resilience, community, and the stories that must continue for future generations.

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Now let's shift back east to Port Townsend, where the City has signed an agreement between the Port Townsend School District and the Port Townsend Police Department. This agreement assigns a School Liaison Officer, or SLO, to the district for the upcoming school year. After months of community discussion, a compromise was reached between parents, school officials, and law enforcement. Rather than a full-time School

Resource Officer embedded in the schools, the SLO will act in a more limited capacity – responding to specific incidents and delivering educational programs only when necessary.

Superintendent Linda Rosenbury emphasized that the officer's presence will be non-intrusive. The SLO will not be stationed at the schools full-time but will be the primary officer to respond to law enforcement calls and make occasional site visits. Any interactions between students and the officer will be voluntary, with the officer reporting to the school office before any visit.

The SLO will also lead educational sessions on topics like cyberbullying and situational awareness, but the emphasis will remain on maintaining a safe and comfortable environment for students. The program will also undergo annual evaluations to ensure it meets the community's needs and concerns, with formal processes in place to address any complaints that arise.

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