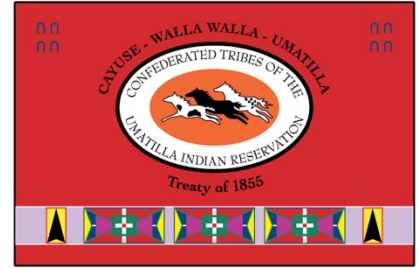


Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation

PRESS RELEASE



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Nixyáawii Community School Teacher Named Regional Teacher of the Year

MISSION – Language arts teacher Niccole Harrison received a nice surprise shortly before heading home from Nixyáawii Community School (NCS) on Thursday, Sept. 19.

Just before the end of the school day, Harrison learned from the Oregon Department of Education (ODE), in partnership with the Oregon Lottery, that she is one of Oregon's 18 2024-25 [Regional Teachers of the Year](#).

"I feel so honored, and I feel really blessed to be here with all of you. You give my job meaning, and not a lot of people can say that their job has meaning for them," she said during a surprise announcement. Nominated by several of her students, Harrison was one of 900 teachers nominated across the state. "It blows me away. It's really meaningful to be nominated by my students."

In her fourth year of teaching, all at NCS, Harrison originally pursued a career in social services until taking an elementary education elective class at Eastern Oregon University. "I really liked it. I enjoyed making lesson plans and working with kids," she said. After that she embarked on her education track.

NCS is located on the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR), east of Pendleton, and is a charter school of the Pendleton School District. Harrison is not a CTUIR member.

Regional Teachers of the Year are nominated by students, colleagues, administrators, friends or family members. Regional winners were identified through a local nomination, application and selection process facilitated by the 19 Education Service Districts around the state. Applicants submitted testimonials and letters of support and were assessed by a diverse panel of regional representatives on the attributes of leadership, instructional expertise, commitment to equity, community involvement, understanding of educational issues, vision and professional development.

As shared by a student in her nomination, "Ms. Harrison's classroom has always been a place of comfort for me, and she has made it a welcoming setting where I always feel heard, safe, and seen. She has done

an excellent job of making her classroom a place where students want to learn. Her whole room is engaging and full of educational opportunities.”

Each Regional Teacher of the Year wins a \$1,000 cash prize and is in the running for Oregon’s 2024-25 Oregon Teacher of the Year – to be announced in October. The Oregon Teacher of the Year Program recognizes and honors teacher excellence, with the state Teacher of the Year serving as the face and voice of exemplary educators across Oregon. Candidates for Oregon Teacher of the Year are dedicated, knowledgeable and skilled licensed public school educators in grades pre-kindergarten-12.

“Now more than ever, we need powerful educators like these,” said ODE Director Dr. Charlene Williams. “Each Regional Teacher of the Year has earned this recognition because they champion every student, uplifting and empowering them to achieve, to create, and to feel a sense of belonging not only in the classroom, but in the wider world, as well.”

On Friday, Sept. 20, once all 18 Regional Teachers of the Year were announced, the full list of statewide winners was expected to be available on the [Oregon Teacher of the Year website](#).

The 2024-25 Oregon Teacher of the Year will receive a \$10,000 cash prize, with an additional \$5,000 going to his or her school, and serve as a spokesperson and representative for all Oregon teachers.

Since 1995, when the Oregon Lottery began allocating revenue to public education, more than \$10 billion has been transferred to school districts across the state. This past year, \$1.6 million of Oregon Lottery funding went to the Pendleton School District, and more than \$7.9 million went to Umatilla County.

The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation is comprised of the Cayuse, Umatilla and Walla Walla Tribes, and formed under the Treaty of 1855 at the Walla Walla Valley, 12 Stat. 945. In 1949, the Tribes adopted a constitutional form of government to protect, preserve and enhance the reserved treaty rights guaranteed under federal law.

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Caption1: Nixyáawii Community School teacher Niccole Harrison holds a check for \$1,000 after learning she is one of Oregon’s 18 2024-25 Regional Teachers of the Year on Thursday, Sept. 19 at NCS in Mission. She will now be eligible for the Oregon Teacher of the Year award later this year. CHRIS AADLAND/CONFEDERATED UMATILLA JOURNAL

Caption2: Niccole Harrison