

Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation

PRESS RELEASE



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CUJ Reporter Wins 2 Indigenous Journalists Association Awards

MISSION – The Indigenous Journalists Association on Friday, June 21 announced the winners of its 2024 Indigenous Media Awards, and Confederated Umatilla Journal Reporter Christopher Aadland earned two prizes for covering the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR).

“It’s an honor to have my work recognized like this, especially since I’ve been with the CUJ for such a short time,” Aadland (Red Lake Band of Chippewa/Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe) said. “I’m excited to further earn the trust of the CTUIR community and tell the stories and highlight issues that are important to it. As (CUJ Editor) Lisa (Snell) and I spend more time in the community and learn more about the CTUIR, we can keep improving our coverage and making the CUJ something people rely on.”

In the Professional Division II – Print/Online category, Aadland won first place for Best News Story for his “Parent pushback leads to day care rate hike,” which published in the December 2023 CUJ. The story dealt with concerns from parents about the CTUIR’s proposed rate hikes of up to 74% at its Átaw Miyánašma Learning Center for families that didn’t qualify for tuition assistance. After hearing those concerns, tribal leaders paused the planned rate increase.

Aadland’s other award was for third place in Best Environmental Coverage in the Professional Division II – Print Online category. His story “Surprising research findings challenge assumptions,” which published in the November 2023 CUJ, revealed that Umatilla Basin aquifers are being recharged by precipitation from the Blue Mountains at rates much lower than expected due to the range’s geological makeup and history. The findings were important because they help guide CTUIR policy makers and water managers address water rights and ground water issues.

“I wasn’t surprised Chris’ day care rate story won the category. He did some really good work on that piece, and it was an easy choice to submit it for consideration,” Snell (Cherokee Nation) said. “I started mid-July last year and Chris joined me in August, so we really only had four issues to choose entries from, September to December. I’m pleased he’s bringing home two awards out of the four categories entered and am looking forward to reviewing 2024 for next year’s competition. I’m proud of Chris for hitting the ground running and turning in some great work.”

Winners will be recognized during the 2024 Indigenous Media Awards Banquet on July 27 as part of the 2024 Indigenous Media Conference in Oklahoma City.

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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Caption: Christopher Aadland