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Working to increase Native presence

Obstacles remain for higher education and getting a degree

BY BRIAN SOERGEL

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November is Native American Heritage Month, a particularly important commemoration in Washington, which is home to 29 federally recognized tribes.

Despite the state's rich Native American roots, there remain many obstacles to equity in education. For example, only 17 percent of Native American students attend college, as opposed to the national average of 60 percent.

Further, while 28 percent of the general population holds a college degree, only 13 percent of Native Americans do.

The Beacon reached out to Tonya Drake, vice president of the Northwest region and chancellor of WGU Washington, to get an idea of what can be done to increase those numbers.

"These data points underscore that there's so much more we can and should be doing to help Native American students access higher education and unlock their future potential by obtaining a degree," Drake said.

Prior to being named chancellor at WGU, Drake joined Edmonds Community College (now Edmonds College) in Lynnwood in 2013 as special assistant to the president for equity and inclusion. In 2014, she was named interim vice president for college relations and advancement. That position became permanent in 2015.

With a strong connection to First Nations Coastal Salish as well as mixed-European

see NATIVE PRESENCE page 3 ▶

Hundreds line up for COVID testing



Beacon photo by Brian Soergel

Michelle Grigsby of Edmonds was the first in line for free COVID testing in Edmonds. Another event planned in Edmonds, see page 15.

Parking lot fills up fast at Edmonds-Woodway

BY BRIAN SOERGEL

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Michelle Grigsby took the test for her grandma.

Grigsby was first in line Monday, Nov. 23, for the free COVID testing offered by Verdant Health Commission and Medical Teams International, in partnership with the city of Edmonds.

"I'm her power of attorney," said Grigsby, manager of the Sound View apartments on Sixth Avenue North in Edmonds. "I need to make sure I haven't been exposed to anybody going out, going shopping, so I

can do the things I need to do for her."

Grigsby had plenty of company, as cars filled the Edmonds-Woodway High School parking lot and spilled out onto 76th Avenue West. The line then worked its way west on 212th Street SW toward Five Corners.

Edmonds police officers directed traffic in the lot. Shannon Burley, deputy director of the Edmonds Parks Department, was also on hand to help with traffic.

Testing began at 10 a.m. An hour earlier, half the parking lot was full.

"It goes pretty quickly," she said. "So once we get the medical part set up and

the cars moving, we anticipate a full day of testing. No one will be turned away. If you don't have a vehicle, you won't be turned away."

Burley herself said she would be getting tested as well.

"It seems like the right thing to do," she said.

By 2:30 p.m., Burley said more than 185 people had been tested. At that point, people at the end of the line, on 212th, were being told to come back later.

"It'll be nonstop for seven hours," said Burley. "We will be working to figure out to

see COVID TESTING page 15 ▶



Beacon photo by Brian Soergel

Annie Fortnum at her Fairwinds-Brighton Court home with Charley and Teddy.

Serving all for Thanksgiving, even during COVID

Annie, of Annie's Kitchen, will be on hand for the annual dinner

BY BRIAN SOERGEL

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Annie Fortnum hasn't spent as much time the last few years as she used to at the community kitchen — one that was named after her at Edmonds Lutheran Church. "I don't go to the kitchen much anymore. I'm going to be 90 years old in July." (More specifically, Annie said she's "89 and a half.")

"But I keep my finger in the pie, so to speak."

That means Annie plans to visit Annie's Community Kitchen — everyone just calls it "Annie's Kitchen" — on

Wednesday to help with this week's Thanksgiving meal, where up to 300 people are expected to receive to-go meals while wearing masks and socially distancing.

Before the coronavirus, volunteers served meals in the church's large Fellowship Hall. For the last 38 weeks, however, volunteers have served customers under canopies, said board member and self-described "No. 1 server" Joanie O'Malley.

Some who come to Annie's Kitchen recently lost their jobs; others are behind on medical bills. Some just need a

see ANNIE'S KITCHEN page 14 ▶

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