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*Rural character...
Economic opportunities*

STORY IDEAS

Pend Oreille County has been writing its own story for nearly 200 years and we'd love it if you would share it with your readers and viewers. The following items may give you some story ideas.

- ❖ **First Peoples** The earliest inhabitants of the land now within Pend Oreille County were Indian tribes: Archaeological evidence shows Native American presence as early as 11,000 years ago. In 1809 the North West Company explorer David Thompson (1770-1857) made his first trip down the Pend Oreille River. The Indians he found were the Kalispels, which means “*camas people*,” after a root that was their staple food, and the Pend Oreilles. The Kalispels currently have a reservation near Usk, the smallest in the state. White settlement and the reservation system forever altered the traditional Kalispel way of life. The strength of the remaining approximately 340 Kalispels lies not in numbers but in determination and vision. Their off-reservation Northern Quest Casino at Airway Heights near Spokane supports, among other projects, the Camas Institute, which addresses educational, vocational, mental, and spiritual needs of tribal members and aspires to provide a model for other tribes.
- ❖ **Gold, Lead and Zinc**
The real mining bonanza was in lead and zinc extracted from the Metaline Mining District by hard-rock mining methods. From 1928 until the early 1950's, the district was the state's major producer of those metals. But before that, it was a gold rush!
- ❖ **Birdwatching at its Best: Over 267 Bird Species Live in Pend Oreille County**
Get a bird's eye view of the unique variety of resident and migratory birds, nestled within a rural setting. A total of 267 bird species can be found here, including a large population of osprey and bald eagles. With the County's abundance of undeveloped forested areas, the region is a haven for birds and bird watchers alike.
- ❖ **“The Zoo”**
“The Zoo” refers to the County's natural resource-rich environment providing habitat, breeding ground, and sustenance for moose, caribou, grizzly, elk, black bear, wolves, fox, and other species. The remoteness and unspoiled environment

finds this corner of the state a migration route for all creatures great, winged, and small.

❖ **Tundra Swan Migration**

Drive on West Calispel Road to view – from the road, please; it’s private property - the thousands of Tundra swans who spend their brief resting and feeding time with us in late February and early March. It all depends on Mother Nature’s calendar of snow melt and spring warming.

❖ **Trees, Loggers and Sawmills**

At the time of earliest settlement, Pend Oreille County was almost entirely forested. Sawmills, lumberjacks – and their dangerous work and life – tell the story of the area as no other activity can. Piling still in the Pend Oreille River speak to the difficulties of moving logs “upriver” on northward flowing water to market.

❖ **Homesteads and Communities**

Settlers valued education: A family would donate land for a school and the building of a one-room log schoolhouse would be a community effort. For many children, the route to school was long and hazardous. Others, living too far from any school, were taught at home. Older children often boarded with families in town for high school. Barn dances and school and Grange activities provided the social life typical of frontier communities. Some of the early settlers did reasonably well and even established towns.

❖ **Steamboats and Railroads**

Steamboat service began on the Pend Oreille River in 1888 and continued for more than three decades as the chief mode of transporting people and freight of the region. Because the Pend Oreille River inconveniently flowed north, it was impossible to float logs south to existing markets and railheads. The log rafts had to be towed upstream to Newport, a slow and uneconomical process. The Great Northern reached Newport in 1892 enabling rail shipment from that point.

❖ **Matches and Cement**

By the early 1920s, Diamond Match, had taken over as the top timber operation in the county. Amazingly, the demand for matches at the time was such that 80 per cent of its stock of mighty Pend Oreille white pines was reduced to matches. And, the cement industry, made possible by deposits of limestone and quartz near Metaline Falls, was another mainstay of the county economy.

❖ **Dam, and another Dam**

A major achievement of the 1950s was construction of the Box Canyon Dam by the Pend Oreille County Public Utility District, the first PUD in the state to build its own dam. Seattle City Light’s Boundary Dam in Z Canyon near the Canadian border began generating electricity in 1967. Its backwaters have made this wild and scenic stretch of the Pend Oreille River navigable and open to recreation.

❖ **Pend Oreille County – Modern Day**

The population has inched up to 12,000, leaving, according to the county website, “ample space for wildlife to thrive” and plenty of opportunity for residents and tourists to enjoy its “lakes, thousands of acres of forest and mountains climbing to heights of 7,500 feet.”