

# Tribal police carrying weapon against opioid overdoses — Narcan

By Brent Merrill

Smoke Signals staff writer

Grand Ronde Tribal Police Department officers will be carrying and trained to use the anti-opioid drug Narcan (Naloxone) while on the job.

Naloxone serum is a narcotic blocker used to treat a patient having a narcotic overdose. Chemically, naloxone is a hydrochloride salt that temporarily reverses the effects of opioid medicines.

Naloxone was patented in 1961 and approved by the Food and Drug Administration in 1971. It has been used by emergency room physicians for many years.

Narcan can reverse the effects associated with the use of heroin, oxycodone, morphine and fentanyl. Narcan also can be used to treat septic shock and certain respiration disorders.

Narcan can be injected or administered through the nose. Narcan nasal spray is a pre-filled, single four milligram dose that has no effect on someone not under the influence of opioids.



*"We're here to save lives and we're here to make Grand Ronde a safer place to live, and this is another tool to help us out with that."*

~ Tribal Police Chief Jake McKnight

Opioid overdoses slow or even stop a person's breathing. Naloxone can quickly restore a patient's breathing to normal.

"I've heard about it for years. It's been in the news," Tribal Police Chief Jake McKnight said. "It didn't really hit my radar until I heard that Yamhill County used it twice on ODs and it saved lives and that just brought it closer to home. I realized it was something we needed."

McKnight said he chose to have Tribal police officers carry the nasal spray version of the drug.

"I felt like it was a safer way of administering that medicine,"

McKnight said. "It's a lot easier to give to a patient. I felt a lot more comfortable about that. It acts faster and it's just safer."

McKnight tasked Officer James Wolfer with being the lead officer to learn about Narcan, its uses and trainings that officers would need to become proficient at using the drug.

"He was really enthused about the whole system and how it works, and he really wanted to get it out to every officer," McKnight said. "I just chose to go ahead and have him look into it. I think he's really excited about it. He got on it really quick. He called all the people he needed to call to get the policies and procedures in place."

McKnight said his department mirrored the current policies and procedures of the Independence Police Department.

"I've known about it probably for a year or two," Wolfer said. "I think when we started looking at it I saw that some of the agencies around here started having it so I started talking to the chief and the lieutenant (Tim Hernandez) about doing it and they said I could go ahead and gather information."

Wolfer, who has been with the Tribal Police Department since May 2016, said he talked to officers at the Dallas and Independence police departments about their use of Narcan and shared that with McKnight and Hernandez.

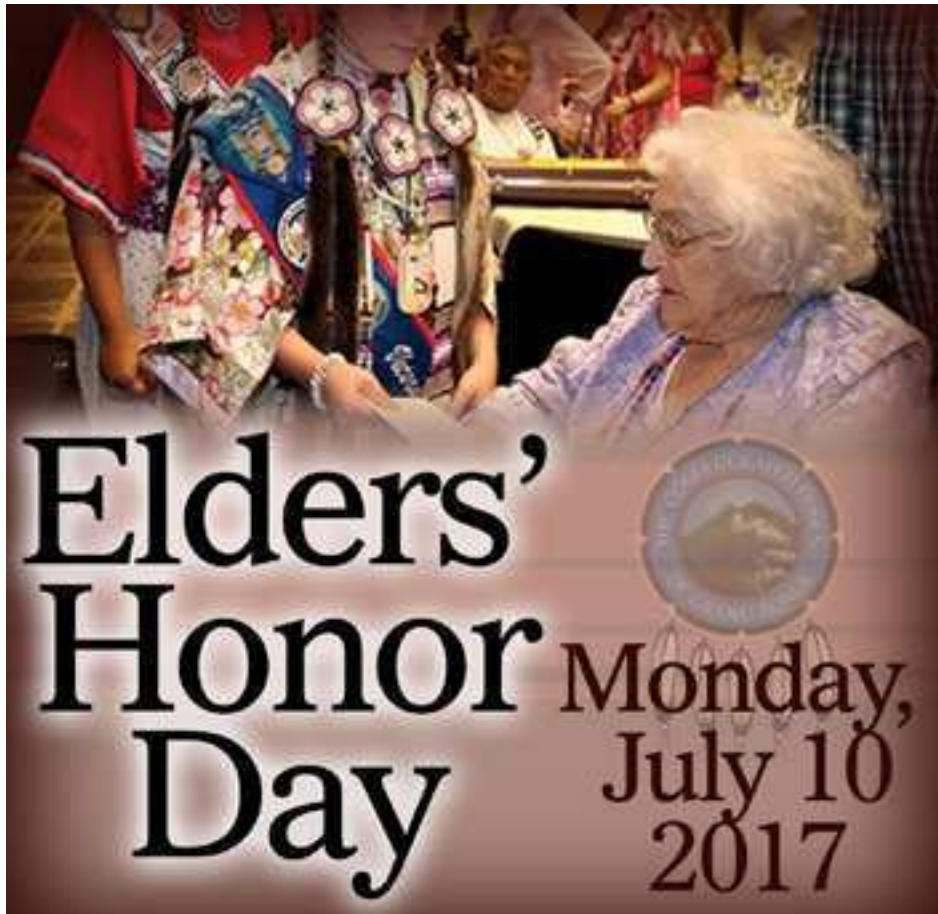
Wolfer, who previously was a Tribal police officer for the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation and graduated from the University of Cincinnati with a degree in criminal justice, said his experiences on the job led him to believe it would be a good idea and another tool to save lives if they also carried the drug.

"I've been to a lot of cases where drugs are involved and we sometimes have to go help medics with things like overdoses or sometimes we are the first ones there and I just really thought with how prevalent any kind of opioid substance is both prescription and substance abuse – I really thought this will save lives," Wolfer said. "To have us be there and be able to potentially save one more life I think it is totally worth it. We have everyone trained up on it."

McKnight said each dose costs \$60 and that the department will acquire its kits through West Valley Hospital. Each dose has a shelf life of one year before it needs to be rotated out.

McKnight said Tribal officers' Oregon Health Authority training will be reviewed and approved by the team at Polk County Behavioral Health in Dallas.

"It's a way to show the community that we are thinking about them even when we aren't making contact," McKnight said. "We're thinking of these different things that will help the community. We try to hit these goals so that we have everything covered because unfortunately someday somebody's going to have to use that and we want to save that person's life. These are all people we care about. We're here to save lives and we're here to make Grand Ronde a safer place to live, and this is another tool to help us out with that." ■



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