

# McKnight was the Tribe's first police officer

**FBI TRAINING** continued  
from front page

ters in Quantico, Va.

After exhausting every training opportunity in Oregon, McKnight said he was seeking to further improve his skills as police chief when he heard about the National Academy from a Baker City officer who had attended.

"I don't have tons of experience as a police officer, only going on seven years, so I am trying to get as much training as possible," McKnight said. "I did all the trainings in Oregon, and this was the best opportunity I could find elsewhere that would help me with the educational part of it."

McKnight, 40, was tapped as Grand Ronde's second police chief in December 2015. He succeeded Al LaChance, who retired in February 2016.

McKnight was the Tribe's first police officer after graduating from the Oregon Department of Public Safety Standards Academy and he jumped right into the thick of things, getting the department up and running.

"When the opportunity came to apply to the National Academy, I had to figure everything out on my own," he said. "Most of the larger departments have someone who has gone before and can help with the process. But I am used to tackling new things so I figured it out, with the help of my lieutenant and sergeant."

According to FBI.gov, leaders and managers of state, local, county, Tribal, military, federal and international law enforcement agencies may attend the academy, but participation is by invitation only through a nomination process.

"There is a highly competitive process that local law enforcement officers must go through before being selected for this honor," said Beth Ann Steele, FBI Portland's public information officer. "That process includes a nomination by a supervisor, interviews of the candidate and co-workers to determine leadership skills and abilities, a background check, a determination of physical fitness and support of former National Academy graduates within the candidate's organization."

Each year, the FBI sponsors four sessions of the National Academy, and provides U.S. students with tuition, books, equipment, meals, lodging and travel to and from their home.

The academy began in 1935, created in response to a 1930 study by the Wickersham Commission that recommended the "standardization and professionalization of law enforcement departments across the U.S. through centralized training." Courses at the time included scientific aids in crime detection, report preparation, criminal investigation techniques, and administration and organization. After World War II began, courses were added in espionage and sabotage.

McKnight was nominated by Tribal General Manager David

## If you go

**Chat With the Chief**

**When:** Noon to 3 p.m.

Wednesday, Oct. 25

**Where:** Grand Ronde Police Department, 9655 Grand Ronde Road. Lunch will be provided.

**More information:** 503-879-1474

Fullerton.

"I want to thank Tribal Council and Dave Fullerton for having the trust in me to represent the Tribe in such high executive training," he said.

Fullerton said the FBI training was a win-win.

"It's important to have someone who aspires to better themselves," Fullerton said. "And Jake has the interest in getting more skills. When the FBI comes calling, you don't pass that up. It was a great opportunity we didn't want him to miss out on."

Of the 239 in his class, McKnight said he was the only Tribal officer. Participants hailed from every state, along with international attendees.

Classes were offered in law, behavioral science, forensic science, understanding terrorism/terrorist mindsets, leadership, communication and health/fitness. Courses included leadership and specialized training, where officers shared ideas, techniques and personal experiences.

McKnight applied late last year for the 10-week training and was shocked when he received a call from the FBI within a few weeks.

"I was told it was a two-year waiting list," he said. "But I got a call back to attend the class in January 2017. But it was too early for me to take care of everything I needed to do before I went, so I selected the July class. ... I was lucky to be chosen so fast because some people waited years for the opportunity to go."

"It is basically like going to college and living in a dorm room. We shared a room and bathrooms, and were in classes all day."

Training began at 7:30 a.m. and lasted until 5 p.m. Courses were taught by FBI agents who specialized in a particular area of study.

"It was very helpful to get the perspective of someone who has done the job and been out in the field," McKnight said. "They understood what you were going through."

For example, Critical Incident Leadership Negotiations was taught by the agent who negotiated with Somali pirates during the 2009 hijacking of the U.S. container ship Maersk Alabama. The incident was later made into the movie "Captain Phillips" starring Tom Hanks.

"You just can't get that experience anywhere else," McKnight said. "And that was the type of instructors we had. My public speaking class was taught by someone



Courtesy photo by Jim Lockard

**Grand Ronde Tribal Police Chief Jake McKnight carries a sandbag while competing in the Muscle Mania event during his training at the FBI's National Academy.**

with tons of experience. The drug (enforcement strategies) class was taught by a DEA agent. She knew everything about every drug you could think of, and is still sending us information. She is probably always going to be a huge resource for me."

Like many people, McKnight said he was not comfortable with the public speaking part of this job and said that the class was helpful.

McKnight's other classes were Legal Issues for Command Level Officers, Essentials for Law Enforcement Leaders, and Fitness and Law Enforcement. Courses are accredited through the University of Virginia.

"It wasn't so much about doing papers and schoolwork, but most of it was group activities," McKnight said. "There were lots of discussions with other students, who all had a ton of experience in law enforcement. That is what I am lacking, so I wanted to sponge it all up as much as possible. The beauty of this whole program is the networking."

Since he returned a few weeks ago, McKnight said he has already utilized new connections for two local law enforcement issues he has come across.

"You will never get this group of experienced people in one room except at National Academy," he said. "It was also nice to hear from the different countries to see how they solved problems. Like in the UK (United Kingdom), where no one carries guns, but it works for them."

McKnight, who grew up in the area, said that local police are fortunate to have the support of Grand Ronde community members.

"We need to continue to make sure that we are community policing," he said. "A lot of departments don't get that one-on-one time. It is nice to reflect on that and see."

In keeping with the theme of community policing, McKnight will host a "Chat With the Chief," event on Friday, Oct. 25, at the new police department building. Lunch will be served.

Another opportunity allowed

by the National Academy experience was that of living on the East Coast.

"The West Coast is a lot slower paced," McKnight said. "And on the East Coast, it is just different, an experience. Nothing seems to get started until noon on weekends. And traffic can be a nightmare. People are a lot more relaxed here. It was nice to see how good we have it."

Although the networking opportunities McKnight encountered were invaluable,

the other rewarding aspect was the return of his physical fitness.

"I worked out all of my life, then just stopped for a year," he said. "But my physical fitness class helped me learn a ton while I was there, and I got my mind and body back into it. The instructor was the type who gave 110 percent, and if you weren't giving the same, you felt bad."

This preparation and experience helped McKnight drop two things: His weight by 25 pounds and his mile time by several minutes, posting a 6:04 by the time the academy was over.

He also participated in the famous "Yellow Brick Road" run, the final test of the fitness challenge. It is a race that includes a grueling 6.1-mile run through a hilly, wooded trail built by the Marines. Along the way, participants must scale walls, run through creeks, jump through simulated windows, rope climb rock faces, crawl under barbed wire in muddy water, maneuver across a cargo net and more. When the course is completed, students receive a yellow brick to memorialize their achievement, which McKnight has displayed in his office.

"I think the fitness part to this is huge," he said. "Hopefully, I can bring some of that back to my guys and get them working out and in the gym."

McKnight also said that it was a credit to the Grand Ronde Tribal Police Department's nine other employees how smoothly everything went while he was gone for three months.

"They really picked up the slack and it feels good, like I have been doing this job right and everyone understands how to do things," he said.

"They really held down the department and kept things running smoothly," Fullerton said.

Most of all, McKnight wants to thank his wife, Tamara, and his four children.

"I really want to express my gratitude to her for taking care of things while I was gone for three months," he said. ■