

Training focuses on Tribal-based practices

By Danielle Frost

Smoke Signals staff writer

Approximately 100 people ranging from law enforcement to health care providers attended the Oregon Tribal Opioid Training Academy hosted by the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde.

Held Tuesday, July 30, through Thursday, Aug. 1, at Spirit Mountain Casino, the event was organized by Oregon's nine federally recognized Tribes, the Native American Rehabilitation Association, the Oregon Health Authority and Lines for Life, with an emphasis on Tribal-based practices for prevention and healing.

The conference is considered by many as a critical component of health care training as Native Americans have the highest overdose rates of prescription opioids, according to Oregon Health Authority data.

The conference began with the Grand Ronde Honor Guard posting the colors. Tribal Council member, Vietnam War veteran and Elder Steve Bobb Sr. offered an invocation, then welcomed attendees to the Tribe's homelands.

"This is a very important event," he said. "Opioids affect almost each and every one of us. Conferences like this help those who are suffering from this horrible addiction. We have been suffering from this in Indian Country for so many years. Dealing with it is like swimming upstream. It is very hard and I appreciate all of your work."

Grand Ronde Health Services Executive Director Kelly Rowe said that all of the attendees had been touched by addiction and opioids.

"Having this event here and our ability to host it shows our support for making this world a better place," she said.

Health & Wellness Business Office Manager Tresa Mercier and Administrative Assistant Holly Snodgrass helped with finalizing conference details, while the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention provided funding for the event.

Conference planning committee members also included the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, Oregon Health Authority and Lines



Photos by Timothy J. Gonzalez

Warm Springs Emergency Manager Danny Martinez fires a Nerf rifle during an active shooter training exercise held during the Oregon Tribal Opioid Training Academy held at Spirit Mountain Casino on Tuesday, July 30.



Nationally certified addictions counselor Eric Martin leads a discussion on addiction, epidemiology and pharmacology during the Oregon Tribal Opioid Training Academy.

for Life.

A change in the format this year was moving away from a traditional conference style and instead transitioning to all-day break-out groups. The goal was for participants to learn new skills or enhance current ones to bring back to their communities.

Tuesday's breakout sessions included addiction pharmacology, active shooter, adult mental health first aid, administering naloxone and youth outpatient training.

Addiction Pharmacology

Nationally certified addictions counselor Eric Martin led the addiction pharmacology session. He has 33 years of experience and is also an international presenter and recovery advocate, as well as being in recovery himself. He has been teaching addiction pharmacology for 25 years.

The training covered the basics of addiction, such as brain regions involved in the process, early onset use and specific information about various types of drugs.

"We know how drug and alcohol

can affect adults, but we don't know a lot about it affects kids," Martin said. "There have been neuroimaging studies on the brain and those in treatment centers with alcohol use only had lower verbal learning scores. But a lot of these studies don't look at drug combinations and most addicts don't just use one drug."

Martin added that scientists have known since the 1800s that alcohol causes brain damage, but until recently children have not been studied extensively.

"Right now there is a huge study where they're taking images of kids' brains every few years and tracking them over a long period of time," he said. "It could help reveal the roots of mental health and drug abuse. They're also looking at screen time and how that affects the brain."

Active shooter

The active shooter training class, taught by Warm Springs Emergency Manager Danny Martinez and Warm Springs School Resource Officer Kevin O'Brien, described different strategies to survive a mass shooting.

Information included the historical context of mass shootings, and action-based options to potentially lessen the number of injuries or deaths.

Attendees also participated in different scenarios, such as barricading strategies, movement instead of staying put, evacuation and last-resort conflict resolution.

"There is no set formula for how this happens," O'Brien said. "Shooters want the body count."

In addition to working in law enforcement, O'Brien also owns Safety Training, which provides building security assessments and active shooter awareness classes for the Warm Springs community.

"What I teach students and staff is if the fire alarm goes off, they do

not evacuate unless they see smoke or fire."

O'Brien noted that a fire alarm can be used to signal that something is wrong.

"I don't know of a school that has burned down since the 1950s," he said.

O'Brien added that code words are not a good idea when there is an active shooter, and instead plain language should be used so everyone on the premises is aware of the situation.

"There is nothing wrong with letting the guy who is the shooter know that you know he is there," O'Brien said. "If everyone is aware, this puts pressure on him because he knows he is on a timeline before law enforcement arrives."

If people are trapped in a room and a shooter is in the building, they are advised to lock and barricade it using whatever furniture they can find, and to turn off the lights. That way, if a shooter is able to enter the room, it will make it much more difficult to accurately fire a weapon. Throwing objects, from water bottles to coffee cups to chairs and yelling also help to distract a shooter.

"Only dial 911 when it is safe to do so," O'Brien said. "Also, when you get into an active shooter event, sometimes the phone lines can be overwhelmed, but text messages will still go through."

Youth outpatient training

Identifying barriers youth experience trying to obtain addiction and behavioral health services, and how to navigate those was the topic of youth outpatient training, taught by NARA Youth Residential Treatment Program Manager Luci Ladue.

She explained how popular culture glamorizes drug use to the point where youth think it is normal.

"This is what our youth are experiencing," she said. "The social piece of trying to fit in is really strong for teenagers. We need to look at how we can support adolescent brain development in a positive way. Kids aren't just 'being bad,' this is a part of learning and growing."

Ladue, who is in recovery, noted that 70 percent of mental health symptoms develop in the adolescent years, and it is important to teach youth healthy coping mechanisms so they don't self-medicate.

"So when they experience things, they know there are other ways to deal with it," she said. "Things like being involved in sports, culture or prevention programs, those can still give them a little rush, but are safe and healthy."

Sessions held on Wednesday and Thursday included Community Emergency Response Training, medication assisted treatment, trauma and addiction yoga, and pain and the brain, in addition to continued addiction pharmacology, youth outpatient training and administering naloxone. ■



From left, Warm Springs community member Papo Cruz, Coquille Indian Tribal employee Dustin Beauvais and instructor Warm Springs Police School Resource Officer Kevin O'Brien during an active shooter training exercise held during the Oregon Tribal Opioid Training Academy held at Spirit Mountain Casino on Tuesday, July 30.