

Nine students are enrolled in the pathway

EMPEY continued
from front page

"I applied for the deputy director role because I am interested in mentorship and I have a little bit of experience in post-baccalaureate pathways because I did a post-baccalaureate pathway at Georgetown," Empey says.

The Center for Excellence created the Wy'east Post Baccalaureate Pathway, named after the traditional Multnomah name for Mount Hood. The pathway's three major components seek to help Native American and Alaskan Native students prepare for the rigors of medical school both academically and professionally, as well as provide a culturally relevant learning experience.

The pathway started accepting students in fall 2018 with an enrollment of seven. Five students succeeded and were granted conditional acceptance into the OHSU School of Medicine. The other two students went on to pursue a master's in public health and research health disparities, respectively.

"So they all stayed in health care, but five of them went on to the School of Medicine route," Empey says.

This year, nine students are enrolled in the pathway, which does not charge tuition and offers an \$840 monthly stipend.

The pathway targets students who have earned their bachelor's degree and have applied to but not been accepted to a medical school or are missing a critical piece of educational experience, such as not passing the Medical College Admission Test.

Students receive six months of intense science and population health instruction, as well as being



Smoke Signals file photo

Tribal member Allison Empey is the deputy director of the Northwest Native American Center for Excellence at Oregon Health & Science University in Portland. She is working to increase the number of Native Americans and Alaskan Natives who pursue careers in the health care field.

taught how to learn. They are then put through an intensive MCAT course, learning how to take the important test. In the spring, they must complete a research project.

"Kind of threaded throughout this curriculum is also a cultural component," Empey says, such as a blanketing ceremony at the end of the year and basketry courses. "Throughout the course, we have an indigenous health and wellness curriculum where we focus on what it means to be well ... the spiritual, physical, mental and emotional aspects."

Once accepted into a School of Medicine, students must come up with funding or scholarships to pay for the four years of study.

Empey, 36, earned her bachelor's degree from Stanford University in 2006 and attended medical school at the University of California San Francisco from 2009 to 2013. Her residency program was at Oregon

Health & Science University from 2013 to 2016.

After her pediatrics residency program was complete, Empey was accepted to serve an additional year as a chief resident.

Currently, Empey works in the academic pediatrics field, which is when a doctor works at a university and has interests in scholarly work such as research, advocacy and medical education in addition to working with residents who treat patients. She also works with outpatients as well as patients in the OHSU newborn nursery.

After joining the Grand Ronde Health Committee in 2017, Empey met Health Services Executive Director Kelly Rowe, who mentioned the Tribe was looking for a pediatrician. Empey, who lives in Portland, visits Grand Ronde two days every other week and will soon start visiting on a weekly basis.

Empey says the importance of being a Native American physician caring for Native American patients strikes a chord with her when she visits the Tribal clinic for care for Grand Ronde children.

"It is just more meaningful for me to be at the Tribe," Empey says. "I feel really connected to all of my different patients at the Tribal clinic. ... Oftentimes we have a shared background. I maybe have more of an understanding of historical

trauma and the current state of what it's like in the Tribe."

The Wy'east Post Baccalaureate Pathway has recently received additional Indian Health Service funding that will allow it to expand to Washington State University in Pullman and the University of California-Davis and operate through 2024. Empey says they also will re-apply for the current federal funding when it runs out. Applications open on April 1 and close May 30.

In addition, Spirit Mountain Community Fund, the Grand Ronde Tribe's philanthropic entity, awarded \$38,500 to the pathway to provide anatomy courses to students.

"American Indian and Alaska Native people face significant health disparities, which is further jeopardized by a shortage of health care professionals who come from these communities," said Dr. Erik Brodt (Ojibwe), director of the Center for Excellence. "We aim to change that."

"We need Native American and Alaskan Natives in every specialty out there and we need them in rural communities, in urban Native communities and also in academic centers too because we need representation there and mentors for our students as they go through the journey," Empey says.

As a Grand Ronde Tribal member who is a doctor, Empey says she hopes she can be a role model for younger aspiring Native American and Alaskan Native medical school students. High school students who are interested in health care professions can shadow her and other doctors at the Tribal health clinic as part of the Tribal Health Scholars program, she adds.

"It is hard to imagine being something if you've never seen a Native American physician before," Empey says. "The biggest thing is the center is here to support those interested in going into health care. ... The opportunities exist and we are here to support you and I hope my being at the clinic inspires someone to dream 'I can be a doctor' because they can."

For more information, visit www.ohsu.edu/school-of-medicine/nnacoe/wyeast-post-baccalaureate-pathway on the Internet. ■

Reibach to be featured on 'Oregon Art Beat'

By Dean Rhodes

Smoke Signals editor

Jan Michael Looking Wolf Reibach, a Grand Ronde Tribal member of Kalapuyan descent and world-renowned Native American flutist, will be featured on Oregon Public Broadcasting's "Oregon Art Beat" at 8 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 30, and 1 a.m. Sunday, Feb. 2.

The episode is titled "Circles of Life" and profiles Looking Wolf, who is a "master of Native American flute."

Looking Wolf also recently received a Lifetime Achievement Award from One World Music Radio, the No. 1 radio station in Europe that plays instrumental music. In early September, he joined fellow honorees Medwyn Goodall, Miriam Stockley and David Lanz on the radio station's Roll of Honor.

Looking Wolf started playing Native American flute on the Grand Ronde Reservation. Over two decades, he has released 23 albums that have incorporated Native American flute across a variety of musical genres with a healing message of unity for all people.

He also has won six Native American Music Awards, including the highest honor for Artist of the Year; six Global Music Awards; an Indigenous Music Award; and received the Oregon Peace Star Award from Oregonians for Peace.

"My heart is full of gratitude for this music journey and these wonderful honors," he said. "Without my Tribe, family, flute makers and production team, none of it would be possible."

In 2018, he wrote and recorded "A Special Place" to commemorate the 150th anniversary of Oregon State University, where he teaches Native American flute in the College of Liberal Arts and facilitates an annual Native American flute circle that holds the world record for most players.

His most recent release, "Rising Moon," is a two-disc set with 28 songs. The first disc includes contemporary flute with full accompaniment while the second disc is meditative flute playing.

Looking Wolf lives in Salem with his wife, Rhonda, and also teaches the Native American flute at local workshops. He also works for his Tribe as the Lands Department manager.

Ex-Tribal Council member Larry Brandon walks on

By Dean Rhodes

Smoke Signals editor

Former Tribal Council member Larry Brandon walked on on Thursday, Dec. 26, 2019, at the age of 62.

Brandon was born on June 3, 1957. He served on Tribal Council from 1990 to '91. He was elected in 1990 with 92 votes, the third highest total that year behind Mark Mercier and Margaret Provost.

In his Tribal Council candidate statement, Brandon said he worked as a logger, log scaler and lumber broker. He also operated two small businesses, making cultural jewelry and woodworking.

After suffering a serious injury in a car accident, he became more involved in the Tribe, serving on the Tribal Health Committee as



Brandon

secretary and volunteering for the Tribal Alcohol and Drug Youth Program. In addition, he

was a wrestling coach at Willamina Junior High School.

Services are scheduled for 11 a.m. Thursday, Jan. 2, in the Tribal gym with a meal to follow at the Elders Activity Center, 48940 Blacktail Drive.

Bollman Funeral Home in Dallas is assisting the family. A full obituary will appear in the Jan. 15 issue of *Smoke Signals*.