

# Tribe intensifies efforts to get Grand Ronde members counted

By Danielle Frost

*Smoke Signals staff writer*

With the U.S. Census Bureau cutting its operations short by a month, Grand Ronde Tribal efforts have intensified to ensure members get counted by the new Sept. 30 deadline.

Census response rates have historically been low in Tribal communities and have remained so during the COVID-19 pandemic as many Tribes have instituted additional safety measures, such as suspending door-knocking efforts and closing Reservation borders to those from outside the community.

In the 2010 census, Native Americans and Alaskan Natives living on Reservations were undercounted by 4.9 percent, according to Census Bureau data.

In Grand Ronde, efforts are underway to close the response gap, with 56 percent of local Tribal households having been counted thus far. Nationally, the Tribal count is hovering at approximately 38 percent.

Grand Ronde Housing Administrative Program Manager Joan Dugger organizes the Tribal Complete Count Committee. The pandemic has resulted in the suspension of in-person contacts for the census, but the committee is working on other ways to get the word out.

“We’ve hired multiple Tribal members to phone direct to Tribal member families all over the United States to promote and increase our Census 2020 response rate,” Dugger said. “The Grand Ronde Tribal Response Rate is nearing 56 percent, which is a direct result of outreach that we have been working on. We are currently in the top three of nine Tribes for the highest response rate in Oregon.”

Other Oregon Tribal response rates include the Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians, 62.5 percent; Coquille Indian Tribe, 60.4 percent; Confederated Tribes of Umatilla, 54.3 percent; Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians, 53.2 percent; Burns Paiute Tribe, 42.9 percent; Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, 39.5 percent; Klamath Tribes, 38.5; and Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Indians, 33 percent.

Overall, Oregon is 18th in the nation for census completion.

Other efforts to get out the count include advertising through e-mail,

*Smoke Signals* and Facebook, and working with state census representatives to narrow down the list of Grand Ronde Tribal members who have not completed their census forms, and assist them with any questions they may have about the census.

“We will have a table set up with census information on Tribal Council Election Day on Sept. 12,” Dugger said. “There will also be contact information provided for follow up. ... I have (also) been notified that Census 2020 is still accepting applications from Grand Ronde Tribal members that wish to secure a job.”

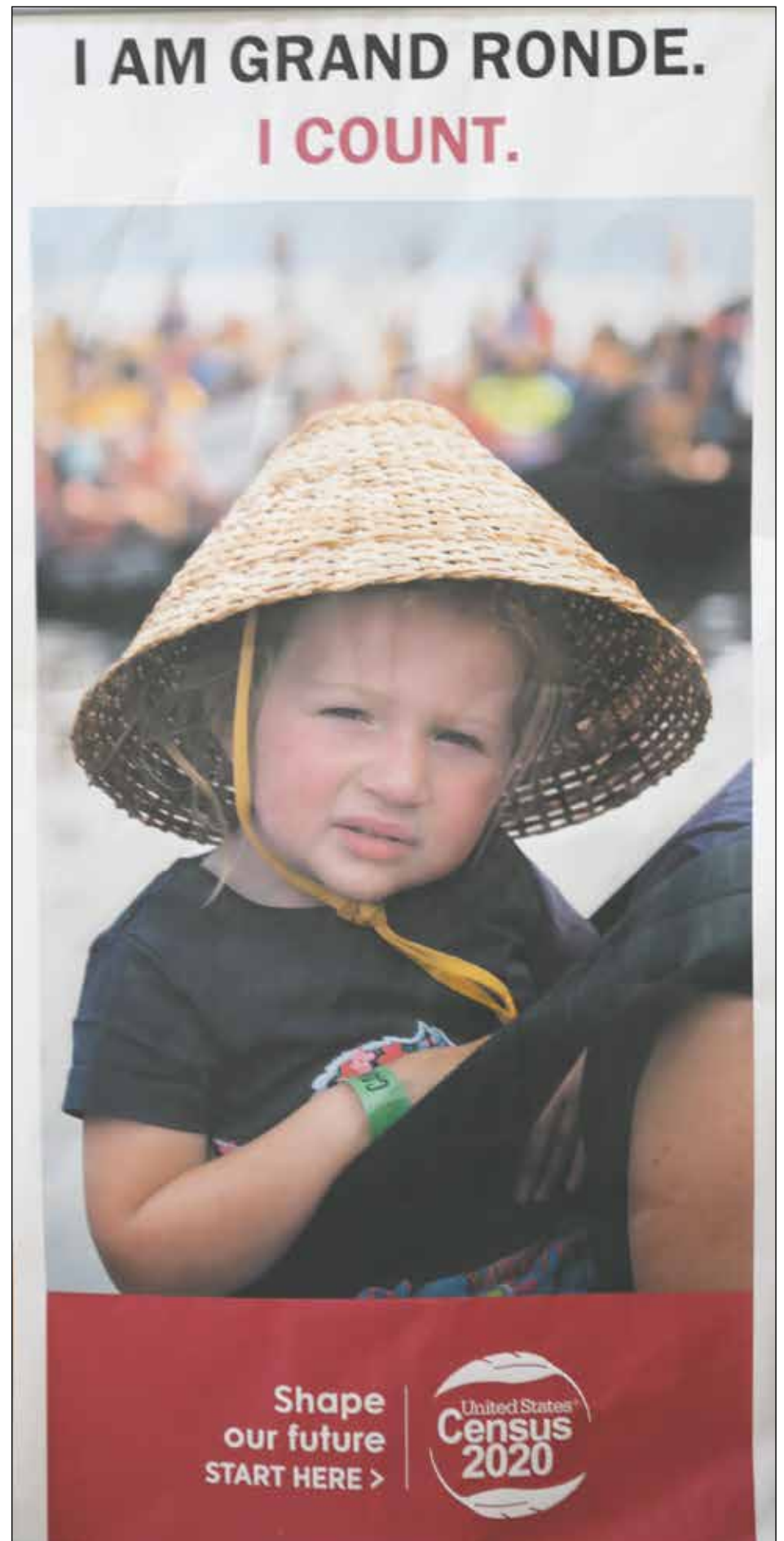
For the first time, the census is also available online. Other options are to call or use mail delivery to return the questionnaire. Dugger said it is extremely important for Tribal members to participate in the process because each response is worth approximately \$3,200 to Tribal grant-funded programs that benefit members.

The U.S. Constitution requires the federal government conduct a census every 10 years to determine how many people are living in the United States and a controversial Trump administration proposal to include a citizenship question on this year’s census form was struck down by a federal court.

The effort to ensure Tribal communities are accurately counted has prompted concern on the federal level. Oregon’s Sens. Jeff Merkley and Ron Wyden, along with 17 other senators, are urging the U.S. Department of Commerce and Census Bureau to honor the previously announced completion date of Oct. 31.

“American Indian, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian leaders have spent months coordinating with the Census Bureau to prepare their communities for the 2020 count and to meet the bureau’s Oct. 31 deadline,” they wrote in a letter to the agencies. “Their herculean efforts to get out the count even during a pandemic should not be discounted or cut short. Failure to get a complete and accurate count of these community populations will have long-term and devastating impacts – from redistricting data, to federal funding, to congressional representation. A fair and accurate census is critical to Native communities’ continued and future prosperity.” ■

*For more information on becoming a census taker, contact Rita LaChance or e-mail [rita.f.lachance@2020census.gov](mailto:rita.f.lachance@2020census.gov). To learn more about the census, visit [www.grandronde.org/census-2020/](http://www.grandronde.org/census-2020/) or e-mail LaChance. She can also be reached at 202-709-1456.*



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