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Tribal police chief concerned about ramifications of drug decriminalization

Grand Ronde Chairwoman
Cheryle A. Kennedy named
to oversight committee

By Danielle Harrison
Smoke Signals staff writer

In November, Oregon became the first state in the nation to decriminalize drug possession after voters overwhelmingly approved Measure 110 with 58.5 percent supporting the proposal.

The new law, which took effect on Feb. 1, changes personal possession of drugs such as cocaine, heroin, oxycodone and methamphetamines to a civil fine of \$100 instead of having a criminal penalty with fines up to \$6,250 and potential jail time of up to one year.

Additionally, those who are fined under the new law can have the fine waived if they agree to complete a health assessment. Drug manufacturing and selling remain illegal activities.

Grand Ronde Tribal Police Chief Jake McKnight said he has concerns about implementation of Measure 110 locally. He said that since November, Tribal officers have been treating drug possession as a civil violation after being advised to do so by attorneys for the state.

“Our caseload numbers have more than doubled from the period from November through January,” McKnight said. “I can’t think of a specific reason other than this new law. This is a huge jump for a small department. I believe the general

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Illustration by Samuel Briggs III

Invasive plants often found on the Grand Ronde Reservation include, clockwise from top left, scotch broom, bull thistle, tansy ragwort and Canada thistle.

Natural Resources raising awareness about non-native plants

Danielle Harrison
Smoke Signals staff writer

Invasive plants come in several forms and many have innocent-enough sounding names: Fox glove, velvet grass and water primrose. However, when not monitored closely, they can pose a serious threat to an area’s ecosystem.

This year, the Tribe’s Natural

Resources Department will be sending a series of educational staff e-mails with resources on invasive plants and how to best prevent their spread as a part of National Invasive Species Awareness Week on Feb. 22-26.

The effort is being led by Natural Resources Specialist Anna Ramthun. Eventually, she hopes to have a full educational program

with in-person events.

“Invasive species affect every community, including Grand Ronde,” Ramthun says. “They are listed as the top five causes of loss of biodiversity, an increase in wildfires and reduction of habitat restoration effectiveness.”

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Long shot: Family drives from Reno for COVID-19 vaccination



Photo by Timothy J. Gonzalez

By Danielle Harrison
Smoke Signals staff writer

The Tribe’s two-day vaccination clinic held on Wednesday and Thursday, Feb. 3-4, attracted droves of people from all over Oregon and Washington.

But it’s likely that one family traveled much farther than many.

Lauren Klein, 51, and her daughters, Maya Reyes Klein, 19, and Isabela Reyes Klein, 21,

left Reno, Nev., at 3:30 a.m. Thursday, Feb. 4, in order to arrive for their afternoon appointments at the Tribal gym for the COVID-19 Moderna vaccine. The Tribe vaccinated 1,636 people during the event, said Health Services Executive Director Kelly Rowe.

The Klein family heard about the clinic from

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Isabela Reyes Klein, 21, and her sister, Maya Reyes Klein, 19, drove from Reno, Nev., with their mother, Lauren Klein, to get the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine at the two-day Vaccination Clinic held in the Tribal gym on Thursday, Feb. 4. The three left their home at 3:30 a.m. and arrived in Grand Ronde around 1 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 4. They say they will make the same trip in March to get their second dose.