

Moderna booster shots available

The Grand Ronde Health & Wellness Center is offering COVID-19 booster doses of the Moderna vaccine to eligible individuals, Health Services Executive Director Kelly Rowe announced.

To be eligible, people must be 65 or older, 18 to 64 years old with underlying medical conditions, 18 or older in a long-term care situation or 18 to 64 and older at increased risk of exposure or transmission because of their occupational setting.

The center will provide boosters to Tribal members and their spouses, other Native Americans and their spouses and families, Tribal employees and their families, and established patients.

The Moderna booster dose can be administered to eligible individuals six months or more after their second vaccine dose. To make an appointment, call 503-879-2032 to schedule a booster dose.

People also can use the COVID vaccine finder to find another vaccination site at www.vaccines.gov/search/. ■



Watchlist: ‘Who should be allowed to adopt Native American children?’

(Editor’s note: It is estimated that there are approximately 149 billion videos on YouTube, and the number continues to grow. Grand Ronde Tribal member and Social Media/Digital Journalist Kamiah Koch sifts through those myriad videos twice a month to recommend a worthwhile Indigenous video to watch. Follow her bimonthly recommendations and enjoy!)

By Kamiah Koch

Social media/digital journalist

HuffPost published a 12-minute video to its YouTube channel on Nov 11, 2019, breaking down the history, justifications and criticisms of the Indian Child Welfare Act.

A few editions ago, we shared the This Land podcast, which does an extensive deep-dive into the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) in its second season. If you don’t have time to listen to the five hours of audio from that, this video offers a quicker briefing on ICWA.

The video starts by explaining the ICWA was established in 1978 by Congress after decades of Native American children being forcibly removed from their communities to be put in assimilation schools or adopted out of their family by the Indian Adoption Project from 1858 to 1967.

More than 40 years later, ICWA is being challenged by some who say it is now tearing non-Native families apart.

The video interviews Joey and Anita Gullard, a white couple who became the legal guardians of four Native American children in 2016, but spent years in court trying to adopt them.

“It’s like the Tribe is trying to stack the cards against us,” Anita Gullard says in the video. “Simply because we are not Native American.”

The video addresses several perspectives of this complex issue. Susan Harness is a member of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes. She is interviewed in the video as someone who was removed from her birth family and placed with a white couple.

“I wanted to find the people who look like me,” Harness says in the video. “I was tired of being the only brown person in the communities where I lived and not having anybody around that knew what that felt like or even cared what that felt like.”

Mathew Fletcher, a law professor at Michigan State University and a member of the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians, discusses the assimilation tactics before ICWA. Fletcher’s family also adopted two Native American boys through ICWA.

The video features Margaret Jacobs, a history professor at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln specializing in Native child removal. She addresses the American Indian Movement of 1968 where Native peoples’ protests led to Congress passing ICWA.

Allie Maldonado is the chief judge and member of the Little Traverse Band of Ottawa Indians. Prior to ICWA, she says her family had been torn apart. As an adult, she was able to adopt a child from a nearby Tribe through ICWA and have a Native family of her own.

“What that has meant for my son is that not only is he growing up in his community,” Maldonado says in the video, “but he has a connection in his community that will stay with him and be relevant to him his entire life.”

The last person the video interviews is Mark Fiddler, a member of the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians and an adoption attorney. He is one of the few Native people openly fighting to have ICWA overturned.

To watch the video and interviews for yourself, go to www.youtube.com/watch?v=hi7f0OCbI-8 or find it in the *Smoke Signals* Watchlist playlist on YouTube. ■



Contributed photo

Grand Ronde Tribal member and Cultural Advisor Bobby Mercier recently was honored as being one of the top 10 percent of artists in the Respect the Artists international online competition for his head chief carving.

Mercier has been carving for approximately 18 years

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“I had recently finished it as a commissioned piece for a downtown Portland building next to City Hall,” Mercier says. “It was chosen for the lobby area and (afterward), I was contacted by RTA to submit it in their contest.”

The competition is billed as a “mark of recognition to visual artists internationally, who are recognized beyond their creative achievements. They are highlighted by the people and followers who back and support their dreams.”

Mercier joined some 1,400 plus creators from across the globe who submitted pieces ranging from watercolors to multi-media work. Winners are determined by online votes. Mercier’s work garnered 103rd place.

“I was surprised to be in the top 103,” he says. “I was like thinking, ‘That’s pretty cool,’ and got other invitations to submit my work.”

RTA said it is dedicated to “artist opportunity and excitement.”

“Those are two elements we prioritize in our community,” the

website says. “Opportunities, such as buying artwork and donating to causes that uplift local art communities, and excitement, such as our international Respect the Artists awards. ... We support artists to authentically create and confidently share freedom of expression through motivation and community.”

The head chief carving, which is more than six feet tall, took approximately four months to complete, with Mercier often burning the midnight oil to finish. He uses knives and chisels to form the old-growth wood, which is between 800 to 1,300 years old.

Mercier has been carving for approximately 18 years and first learned his craft from former Tribal Cultural Education Coordinator Tony Johnson and carver Adam McIsaac, who offered classes through the Tribe’s Cultural Resources Department.

“I really got into carving after that,” he says.

To see or purchase Mercier’s creations, visit www.etsy.com/shop/BEARTRACKSNDN. ■

