

Breaking News: TUESDAY'S WEATHER: Back to work and school under cloudy skies

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Indian Country casting call: Auditions continue today for Montana production

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By JAMIE KELLY of the Missoulian | Posted: Saturday, February 13, 2010 11:13 pm | No Comments Posted

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[Buy this photo](#) Lily Gladstone of Browning auditions for filmmakers Alex and Andrew Smith Saturday morning in Missoula. The Smith brothers have teamed with First Raise Productions to bring “Winter in the Blood” to the big screen. Photo by MICHAEL GALLACHER/Missoulian

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Word spread like wildfire across Indian Country when the call went out for actors and extras for “Winter in the Blood.”

It was just a month ago that the notice was published in newspapers and Web sites across the Northwest. On Saturday, hundreds of Natives packed a third-floor wing of the University of Montana’s University Center to audition for parts large and small in the upcoming production, set to begin filming this summer.

“I don’t really know what’s going to happen,” said Matthew Weasel, 13, a Missoula boy who waited his turn to enter the audition room. “I’m just going to try my best.”

His mother, Glenda Weasel, kept him company at the noon hour.

Matthew is a fine Native dancer, an actor, an athlete and a busy kid who has just enough room left in his schedule to be in a movie.

“When I saw (the audition notice), I just thought, well, this is something different,” said Glenda. “He’s in sports, he dances in powwows, so I

thought, OK, we'll try it."

Turns out a lot of people from across the Northwest thought the same thing.

The casting crew consisted of directors Alex and Andrew Smith, who are intent on making a movie out of Indian writer James Welch's celebrated novel about the realities of reservation life.

In the first hour alone, 100 applications were completed, and 90 minutes into the scheduled four-hour process, No. 12 had just left the audition room.

After filling out the application, the entrants were taken to a room to get their measurements and a mug shot.

"And after that, it's hurry up and wait," said Hasalyn Harris, one of the film's promoters and public relations agents.

Hurry up and wait is what Perry Lilley Sr. was doing Saturday, waiting for the call for his number: 21.

Lilley, of Wolf Point, jumped at the chance to audition, hoping to land the role of Lame Bull, one of the few specific roles to be filled by the open casting call. Years ago, Lilley acted in Hollywood and has appeared in movies and on television, most recently 1988's "War Party," before drugs and alcohol drove him away.

"My wife told me about this, and my dreams flashed before me again," he said. "I get an opportunity to do this again, this time drug and alcohol free. Thank the Creator."

Lilley has been sober for 17 years "and three hours."

So serious is Lilley about landing the role that he immediately read Welch's novel, studied and rehearsed the character of Lame Bull, and even showed up Saturday dressed in clothing he thought appropriate for the part.

"The one thing I've incorporated in my life was the importance of doing research," he said. "Whether it's coaching basketball or helping people or acting."

Perry Lilley also told his brother Joe about the audition, and persuaded him to give it a shot, even though Joe has never acted before in his life.

"I'm a little bit nervous, because I know there are a lot of people in there," said Joe Lilley, who lives in Ronan. "But I've got a good sense of humor, so I can talk my way into it – maybe."

The casting call was to continue on Sunday in the UC from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Another casting call will be held in the coming months in eastern Montana. Those interested in auditioning can find updated details at www.winterinthebloodfilm.com.

The filmmakers expect to start shooting the movie this summer, entirely in Montana.

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