

# Tribe brings security in-house

By Brent Merrill

Smoke Signals staff writer

The Tribe now has its own Security Department and will no longer contract out security services on Tribal grounds.

Beginning Saturday, April 23, Tribal Security took over from Advance Security, which had been contracting to provide security officers for the last several years. Before Advance, the Tribe contracted with Pro Star Security.

The one constant in security throughout has been Officer Juan Sifuentez, who has provided security services to the Tribe for the last 19 years through Pro Star and then Advance. He is now heading the Tribe's first-ever in-house Security Department.

"We're here to help," said Sifuentez. "We want to make it a positive when they see our security officers and they know that we are going to be trying to help the community. It's more of a respect type of thing."

"It's going to be our goal to be a positive role model out there in the community. It's a lot different atmosphere now. I'm excited. I think it's great that the Tribe finally has its own department."

Currently, the Security Department consists of Sifuentez as the head and his second in command in the role of lead officer is Sgt. Roel Hernandez.

Sifuentez and Hernandez will be joined by five full-time security officers – three of whom are Tribal members. Tribal member officers are Daniel Hyatt Jr., James Knight and Richard Brisbois, and they will be joined by Officer Raymond Daly.

"In this community and for our Tribal members those entry level positions are so important," said Tribal Council member Tonya Gleason-Shepek. "On-the-job training is a huge benefit and this opens that opportunity. We are a community of individual families, but more



Juan Sifuentez

importantly we are all one big family and if you can get Tribal members that are invested in this community then they are going to be able to deal with whatever issues more appropriately and take the right approach.

"They (Tribal Security officers) will understand who we are and our dynamics and become part of the family and be better able to intervene when there are issues. That's why I like the idea of doing it in-house."

Hernandez joins the Tribal Security Department after being a security guard at Spirit Mountain Casino for 14 years.

"I'm glad that Roel accepted the position because he has the experience," said Sifuentez. "We share the same type of vision and that just makes us even stronger. The thing for me that I really liked was that he made it known that he wants to be part of the community and is willing to stay out here and be with the community. That is a big part because we have to have somebody that is wanting to be part of the community. Roel really does care."

Hernandez began his career with the Texas Department of Criminal Justice in the largest prison system in the United States before coming to the Pacific Northwest and working for the Oregon Youth Authority and spending time as a reserve officer for the Yamhill County Sheriff's Department.

Hernandez said he loved working at the casino.

"My time at the casino was great," said Hernandez. "I learned a lot about the Tribe and got to meet a lot

of the Tribal members and a lot of the Tribal Elders. I hated leaving, but it was time for a change and I think this is going to be a very positive change. Hopefully, I'm able to contribute a lot more to the community."

Hernandez' former supervisor Joann Mercier, who is the director of Security at Spirit Mountain Casino, said the Tribe's gain is her department's loss.

"Roel was a great officer," said Mercier. "The internal as well as external guests enjoyed and respected him. He was here for many years and is truly a Spirit Mountain family member. He will be greatly missed."

"I think it's a great hire," said Tribal General Manager Dave Fullerton. "He (Hernandez) is someone familiar with the community and he and Juan are dedicated, good people to have as part of our team."

Fullerton said he has nothing but confidence in Sifuentez to lead the Security Department.

"You've got someone in (Sifuentez) that has historical knowledge. You've got someone that knows these buildings inside and out," said Fullerton. "He knows what the expectation of Tribal Council is. He knows what the expectation of the executive staff is as far as level of security. I think it's hugely valuable. I think you have a very loyal employee in Juan. He remains committed to the organization. He takes pride in what he's doing."

Tribal Council member Jon A. George said having an in-house Security Department is another step in the Tribe's sovereignty.

"I think it's great. I was ecstatic when I found out we were going to do our own," said George. "I think our Security Department is a great enhancement to our safety and protecting all of our Tribal assets and all of our properties. The security is right here. They are looking over and looking out for all of us."

George also thinks Sifuentez is

the right fit for the job.

"He knows our Tribe and he knows our people and he knows our community," said George. "He is very approachable and he is just a great guy. He treats you respectfully. I think it's wonderful."

Sifuentez said the new department will do exactly what the old security team did. They will continue to make sure the facilities are secure, answer alarm calls, provide first response for everyday governmental activities, cover special events, provide process serving and act as bailiffs in Tribal Court.

Sifuentez said he believes the jobs will positively affect the community.

"It will have a huge impact," said Sifuentez. "It gives the officers the opportunity to actually contribute to their community and also better themselves as far as their employment."

Gleason-Shepek said she takes pride in being part of a leadership that sees the opportunities created as a way of continuing to elevate the community as a whole.

"Anytime that we can empower and lift them up (Tribal members) and change their lives, it's a good thing," said Gleason-Shepek. "That makes me so proud."

Fullerton said the jobs the Tribe created to staff the Security Department are better jobs than had been offered by the previous contractor.

"It's been a good transition getting our own Tribal security," said Fullerton. "We've got more control. We have people I think that are more dedicated to the property and to the membership. They feel like they are part of the team. So I think it's a great move. These are better quality jobs with benefits and we pay a couple of dollars more an hour than the contractor paid. It's a career opportunity."

To contact the Tribe's Security Department, call 503-879-2478 or 971-901-1031 after 6 p.m. ■

## Hunting & Fishing

### Lifeways of the Grand Ronde People



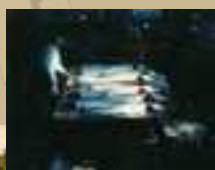
**Who:** All Grand Ronde Tribal members.

**What:** We would like to record your family's hunting and fishing stories for inclusion in the Tribe's cultural and historical collections.

**Where:** Chachalu: Tribal Museum and Cultural Center

**When:** Starting September 1st, 2015

**How:** Contact Stacey Runningbird @ 503-879-2381



## First Foods Celebration set for May 21

The Tribe's Culture Committee is inviting the community to share in a celebration of the First Foods of Grand Ronde on Saturday, May 21, in the Tribal Community Center.

The gathering will begin at 11 a.m. with the meal being served family style between noon and 1 p.m. This year's event will highlight foods traditionally used both pre-contact and post-Reservation, including deer, elk, salmon, eel, turkey, quail, rabbit, game hens, fry bread, wild rice, berries, acorn, camas, elderberry and other wild-crafted foods gathered and prepared by Tribal families.

The Culture Committee is requesting that anyone with an interest in donating food or volunteering should contact Francene Ambrose at 503-879-3663.

For more information about the celebration or to share a family experience with traditional foods during protocol, contact Sarah Ross at 503-879-2006. ■

### FIRST FOODS

FOOD IS HISTORY. FOOD IS LIFE. FOOD IS MEDICINE.

