

New Hatfield Fellow will begin internship virtually

By Danielle Harrison

Smoke Signals staff writer

In what has become a year of pandemic-related cancellations, there have been a few notable exceptions: One of these is the Tribe's Hatfield Fellowship program.

Recently, Grand Ronde Tribal member Simone Auger was selected as the 2020-21 Hatfield Fellow by the Tribe's philanthropic arm, the Spirit Mountain Community Fund.

On Tuesday, Nov. 3, Auger met virtually with outgoing 2019-20 Fellow Cholena Wright (Klamath), Spirit Mountain Community Fund staff members and Tribal Council members for an afternoon briefing.

"I'm very grateful for this opportunity," Auger said. "Tribal affairs is an area of interest I have that means a lot to me. I'm stepping into the fellowship working remotely, but I've worked remotely for many years, so it's not that foreign to me."

Community Fund Executive Director Michael Cherry said that the meeting was a way to recognize outgoing and incoming fellows.

"As you know, we like to do this in person, but cannot this year," she said. "This is our opportunity to thank our outgoing Hatfield Fellow and welcome our new Hatfield Fellow. We want to send them off with our blessing and wish them well, to lift them up and support them."

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, Auger is attending a virtual orientation with the American Political Science Association in Washington, D.C., and concurrently working remotely with U.S. Rep. Kurt Schrader's office. She hopes to travel to the D.C. office in person in January.

"I started this week (remotely) in the office and I'm just really looking forward to the year ahead," Auger



Smoke Signals screenshots

From left, outgoing Hatfield Fellow Cholena Wright (Klamath) and incoming Hatfield Fellow Simone Auger (Grand Ronde) met virtually with Tribal Council and Spirit Mountain Community Fund staff members on Tuesday, Nov. 3. Auger has been assigned to work with U.S. Rep. Kurt Schrader's congressional office.

Past Hatfield Fellows

1998: Pete Wakeland (Grand Ronde)
 1999: Direlle Calica (Warm Springs)
 2000: Alyssa Macy (Warm Springs)
 2001: Bodie Shaw (Warm Springs)
 2002: Kevin Simmons (Grand Ronde)
 2003: Bryan Mercier (Grand Ronde)
 2004: Joseph Hostler (Grand Ronde)
 2006: Dennis Worden (Coeur d'Alene)
 2007: Rebecca Knight (Grand Ronde)
 2008: Francene Ambrose (Grand Ronde)
 2009: Stacia Hernandez (Grand Ronde)
 2010: Shana Radford (Nez Perce)
 2011-12: Darrel L. Lawrence (Grand Ronde)
 2013-14: Rudy Soto (Sho-Ban)
 2014-15: Mary Bodine (Warm Springs)
 2015-16: Maria Givens (Coeur d'Alene)
 2016-17: Robert Ahern (Warm Springs)
 2017-18: Karlen Yallup (Warm Springs)
 2018-19: Traven Joseph (Koyokan Athabaskan/Gros-Ventre)
 2019-20: Cholena Wright (Klamath)

said. "I'm proud to serve our Tribe as a Hatfield Fellow. Even though we are under difficult circumstances, we are a resilient people."

Wright spent her internship

working in U.S. Rep. Peter DeFazio's office. However, she logged in remotely for the last several months due to the pandemic.

"This is an experience I am deeply grateful for, despite the challenges I faced working in a congressional office from a laptop," she said. "To be a part of the work going on and helping my home state and community: I'm really grateful to be able to represent for the past year. It has been so beneficial."

Community Fund Program Coordinator Angela Sears congratulated Wright for quickly adapting to a new way of working.

"She did an amazing job and I heard so many great things about her work," Sears said.

Added Tribal Council Secretary Jon A. George, "We want to thank you for representing us very well and being there."

Tribal Council Chairwoman Cheryl A. Kennedy said Wright was headed toward a great future.

"I know you will have a great career and a greater understanding of what Tribes face as far as the legislative process works," she said. "I appreciate your courage and throwing your hat in the ring when

you started this journey."

Wright said her greatest challenge as a fellow was educating others about Indian Affairs policy decisions.

"I was expecting the federal government to know more about Indian Affairs," she said. "I felt more often than not, especially after the coronavirus hit and the federal response was being mishandled and Tribes were suffering, a feeling of disappointment. There were times I was shocked about the amount of work to do."

The most positive part of Wright's experience before COVID-19 was being able to walk through the halls of Congress.

"It feels like you are a part of something bigger and exciting," she said.

Post pandemic, the best experience was the care and concern shown to her by other congressional staff members.

"That was really helpful for me to be able to push through what was happening," Wright said.

Wright has begun a new position as policy analyst for the National Congress of American Indians, a position she secured after working with the organization during her fellowship.

The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde established the Mark O. Hatfield Fellowship in 1998 as a "living tribute" to honor his accomplishments, both as Oregon governor and U.S. senator.

Every year, Spirit Mountain Community Fund sponsors a Native American to serve as the Hatfield Fellow, who interns in a congressional office for an eight-month term. Placement of the fellow traditionally rotates through the Oregon congressional delegation to enhance mutual understanding between leadership in Washington, D.C., and Indian Country.

Auger, who lives in Vancouver, Wash., received a bachelor of fine arts degree in interior design from Marylhurst University and a master's of interior architecture from the University of Oregon School of Architecture and Environment. She also holds a professional certificate in Tribal Relations from Portland State University's Institute for Tribal Government and a course certificate from Northwest Energy Policy and the Columbia River-Portland State University Mark O. Hatfield School of Government.

Auger becomes the ninth Grand Ronde Tribal member to be named a Hatfield Fellow, joining the likes of Tribal Council Chief of Staff Stacia Hernandez, Grand Ronde Food Bank Coordinator Francene Ambrose and Bureau of Indian Affairs Pacific Northwest Regional Director Bryan Mercier. ■

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Francene Ambrose
Grand Ronde
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