

# Hatfield Fellow accepts full-time position as legislative assistant

By Danielle Harrison  
Smoke Signals staff writer

Current Hatfield Fellow Simone Auger will become the second Grand Ronde Tribal member to work for a congressional office in Washington, D.C., in a permanent capacity after her fellowship is complete in July.

The first Tribal Fellow to work for a legislator was Tribal Council Chief of Staff Stacia Hernandez, who completed her fellowship with Rep. Kurt Schrader's office in 2010 and was hired full-time as the congressman's communications director and district representative for Tillamook and Lincoln counties.

Her specialties included fisheries, transportation, community development, grants, the Federal Emergency Management Agency and ocean issues, including tsunami, marine debris, and wave and wind energy.

Auger is also working for Schrader's office and will stay on as a legislative assistant after July 31.

"It's honestly a dream come true," Auger said. "I'm looking forward to being able to do this in person. When you are on the Hill, you get to collaborate with your team, and also have the opportunity to meet staff members from other offices and network with them."

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.

Spirit Mountain Community Fund annually sponsors a Native American to serve as the Hatfield Fellow, who interns in an Oregon congressional office for an eight-month term. Placement of the fellow



Simone Auger

traditionally rotates through the Oregon congressional delegation to enhance mutual understanding between leadership in Washington, D.C., and Indian Country.

Community Fund Director Michael Cherry said that the fellowship is a "once-in-a-lifetime" opportunity.

"I continue to be so inspired by our Hatfield Fellows, who are determined to be strong ambassadors in their communities with lasting benefits to all the Oregon Tribes," Cherry said. "I lift my hands to the Grand Ronde Tribal leaders who created the Hatfield Fellowship in 1998, and also to the 21 Hatfield fellows ... who make us all so proud."

So far, Auger's fellowship with Schrader's office has been entirely remote, although congressional offices are gearing up to return staffers to in-person work.

During her time working with Schrader's office, Auger has focused primarily on Tribal issues, but also has assisted with issues pertaining to natural resources, agriculture, Social Security, animal welfare and housing.

"Agriculture and natural resour-

ces are areas I have a lot of interest in," Auger said. "There are pieces and aspects I have familiarity with, and all of these are of interest to me. I have a lot of background knowledge that I was able to bring to the table."

In her full-time role as legislative assistant, she will continue to focus on these topics and others that come her way.

So far, the biggest challenge of the fellowship year has been the inability to work in person.

"Everything has been altered and this has really been a challenge," she said. "It's really hard because when you think of a normal fellowship, you are in the office, working together on site. You get a lot more networking and spontaneous conversations that happen."

She offered the example of various congressional committee meetings being held online.

"It's a very different model (than in-person) and that makes it hard to fulfill the complete experience," she said. "However, Rep. Schrader's office has been really helpful with helping employees adjust to the changes."

The most enjoyable aspect has been working on different policies.

"I love what I am doing," Auger said. "The nature of the work is deeply interesting. I really have found a labor of love. I enjoy every day. I'll continue to work on legislative issues and anything else that comes up, and provide support, information and input to Rep. Schrader's office."

Auger said that research is and will continue to be a big part of her job.

"There is a lot of research," she said. "There's past legislation and

current legislation that comes to us during the session. ... I'm looking forward to the transition of working in person and being able to walk around and see other people."

A small sign that things are returning to normal is the plan to meet with some fellow attendees of the American Political Science Association, where Auger attended virtual orientation sessions in the fall.

"There was a lot missing from that, but a small group of us are planning to have lunch in D.C. soon," she said.

Auger also said she appreciates the Hatfield Fellowship program.

"I'm very blessed to have it," she said. "I appreciate the opportunity and will continue to make sure I do my very best and always think about my role as something I am doing to serve our Tribal community and legislative district."

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

**Seeking Veterans (men and women) from all eras (wartime and/or peacetime).**  
(Especially WWII, Vietnam, Korea, the Gulf War and the War in Afghanistan)

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(All Veterans Welcome! Tribal or non-Tribal and in the local area)

**Q: Has it been a while since you applied for benefits or had your benefits reviewed?**  
**A:** New legislation could have been passed since the last time you applied for benefits which means potential new avenues of eligibility for you!

**Q: Do you have a current service-connected disability, but are interested in applying for an increase or additional disabilities?**  
**A:** Contact me to schedule an intake appointment as soon as we can to start the process.

**Q: Have you thought about applying, but think you might not qualify?**  
**A:** Contact me and let's try anyway. You might qualify for additional compensation.

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Contact me, the **CTGR TVSO** to find out more about the available benefits that could help you and/or your family.

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**TRIBAL VETERANS SERVICE OFFICE**  
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**June 24, 2021**  
**6:00PM - 7:00PM**

Hosted by: Post Treatment Services / Social Services  
Chris Holliday (503) 879-1452  
Michael Herrin (503) 879-4543

Download the [Zoom](#) app or enter [Zoom](#) in your browser.  
Ask to join meeting then enter the information below.

**Meeting ID: 945 4811 1618**  
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If you have any questions feel free to contact Social Services at (503) 879-2034

Let's get together and Support Recovery..

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