

Online petition started for council to reconsider termination

**FULLERTON continued
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Fullerton became interim general manager in 2015 after the departure of Mark Johnston. He officially became general manager in January 2016.

During his tenure as general manager, Fullerton guided the Tribe through the COVID-19 pandemic, which broke in March 2020. An emergency declaration approved by Tribal Council put him in charge of the Tribe's response to the pandemic. The emergency declaration is still in effect.

"I will forever be grateful for the service Dave has provided to our community," Tribal Council member Lisa Leno said in an e-mail after Fullerton's dismissal was announced. "It has been an honor working with him."

"What a sad day for GR (Grand Ronde)," Tribal Council member Jon A. George said in another e-mail. "Especially for the people who know the type of person Dave is and the caring heart he has for our Tribe and the community. What an honor to work for him for 15 years under Social Services and then reversed roles for Tribal Council as GM. He will be greatly missed."

Fullerton did not respond to a *Smoke Signals*' text request for comment.

In reaction, an online petition calling for Tribal Council to reconsider Fullerton's "without cause" termination was posted at [ipeitions.com](https://www.ipeitions.com). As of Tuesday, Jan. 31, 332 people had e-signed the petition. Former Tribal Council member Tonya Gleason-Shepek presented the petition to Tribal Council during its Jan. 25 meeting.

Langley, however, cautioned attendees, some of whom were wearing "We support Dave" T-shirts, that Tribal Council could not discuss employment matters in a public forum.

"Due to the nature of the topic, we are not able to discuss employment-related matters in this forum," Langley read from a prepared statement. "We think it is important to note there is a separate process in place for employees who believe employment decisions were wrongfully taken against them. That process is handled through the Tribal Court, which is the appropriate forum for allegations of wrongful employment actions to be resolved."

Former Tribal Council members Jack Giffen Jr. and Reyn Leno also spoke in support of Fullerton, as did several Tribal members and employees who cited his long hours helping the community through difficult times, such as ice and snow storms, threatened flooding, the nearby wildfires that occurred in the summer of 2020 and COVID-19.

"He has done a hard job for this Tribe," Gleason-Shepek said. "Sometimes the things that he has had to do are very difficult. He's had to fire Tribal members. He's had to tell Tribal members 'no.' He has had to trespass Tribal members. Those are all very hard things to do, but that's the job and he does it. ... I think those of us that know Dave, we trust his integrity and we do not believe this is an HR performance issue and if it's not, then I think we as the membership do deserve an explanation."

Assistant Tribal Attorney Kim D'Aquila reiterated that it would be inappropriate for Tribal Council to comment on an employment-related matter during the Jan. 25 meeting.

Fullerton started working for the Grand Ronde Tribe in June 2001 as an Indian Child Welfare caseworker. He managed the Social Services Department from December 2001 through late August 2015 when he was tapped to serve as interim general manager.

Before joining the Grand Ronde Tribe, Fullerton was the Social Services director for the Quinault Indian Nation in Washington state. He also worked as a probation officer for the Lake County Youth Court in Poulson, Mont., and as a sociology

instructor for Stone Child Tribal College on the Rocky Boy Indian Reservation in Montana.

Fullerton earned a bachelor's degree in sociology from the University of Montana in Missoula, where he minored in both Native American studies and criminology. He graduated from Jesuit High School in Portland, Ore.

Finance Officer Chris Leno has assumed the general manager duties until a new person is hired. He has previously served in the general manager position. ■



Photo by Kamiah Koch

Tribal Council member Jon A. George stands during the posting of the colors at the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians' 2023 Winter Conference on Monday, Jan. 23, in Portland. Veterans Service Officer Ramona Quenelle carried the Grand Ronde flag.

Opioid epidemic affecting Tribal people at high rate

**ATNI continued
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gaming organization, where that money comes from and how we give to nonprofits in the state," she said. "So we buffed that marketing up. ... Not that we want to brag about how much money we give away, but we are a huge support to our community."

"People just aren't aware of it and that's something we really worked on. I do believe through COVID we were able to get a lot of community support because the Tribe really stepped in and made vaccines available and other things to the public."

Harvey discussed the Hatfield Fellowship and said she wished more Tribes would do something similar.

"We take money from our foundation and send a Fellow back to D.C. to work in one of the regional delegation offices for one year," she said. "It's a very high-level internship and we've had huge success stories come from that. ... It's really helped with bringing Indian people back to the table and carry our messages forward."

Other topics Wednesday included an ATNI executive director report, climate change program report, a water/energy report and the National Tribal Fentanyl Summit.

Northwest Portland Area In-

dian Health Board Chairman Nickolaus Lewis (Lummi) said that the ongoing opioid epidemic is affecting Tribal people at a very high rate, and that some morgues in King and Whatcom counties are running out of space for bodies.

"It is reported that the death rate due to overdoses is 30 percent higher than white people," he said. "And with that data is the highest death rate of overdose of all racial backgrounds."

He told attendees about the National Tribal Opioids Summit set for Aug. 22-24 in Tulalip, Wash., and the Washington Opioids Summit tentatively set for the end of May.

"So, we are here today to ask you to join us as attendees," Lewis said. "But also as partners in our efforts of addressing the impacts of fentanyl in our communities. We cannot do this alone. We cannot address these issues in silos. And it's not OK to stay idle and watch this epidemic continue to rob us of our current generation."

The convention wrapped up on Thursday, Jan. 26, with resolutions that will be forwarded to the National Congress of American Indians for consideration. ■

Smoke Signals social media/digital journalist Kamiah Koch contributed to this report.

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Free to all Tribal members and \$50 for non-tribal members.

9615 Grand Ronde Road, Grand Ronde, OR 97396, Building C in room 118.

Lunch will be provided.

To register for this training please contact 503-879-2146 or email at TERO@grandronde.org