

Tribal community support helps locate missing person

By Kamiah Koch

Social media/digital journalist

After an outpouring of support from the Grand Ronde community, Tribal member and missing person Tenatia Jackson-Crain was found on Wednesday, Feb. 14.

Jackson-Crain, 33, was first reported as a potential missing person in July 2023 after a meeting between the Tribe's Social Services Department and Tribal Police.

A flyer created by Tribal member Amanda Freeman and the Tribal Police's missing person flyer were circulated online the second week of February, igniting the community's efforts to find Jackson-Crain.

"It's a work in progress but as long as the community works together toward the same goal, we can fix a lot of things," Freeman said.

According to Freeman, the flyers reached northern California where locals reached out with leads to locations where she had been seen.

Jackson-Crain's step-sister, Tribal member Amber Eastman, felt they could not wait to take action.

Freeman and Eastman decided to create a raffle to raise the funds



Tenatia Jackson-Crain

for Eastman to go search for Jackson-Crain.

Again, the community stepped up.

Freeman donated a certificate for a photo shoot to the raffle, while other Tribal members donated ribbon skirts, dentalium earrings, necklaces and beading supplies. Tribal Council member Matthew Haller donated a certificate for a breakfast for two at the Wildwood Inn restaurant in Willamina, which he owns.

The Tribal community bid on these items and together raised \$225.

"My husband and I loaded up the Subaru with the gas money we could gather and drove down,"

Eastman said.

For her safety and at the request of the family, Smoke Signals is not detailing Jackson-Crain's location.

They stopped at two locations Jackson-Crain was reportedly at, and she was found on their second stop.

"We left yesterday morning (Feb. 14) and found her within an hour of being there," Eastman said.

According to Eastman, Jackson-Crain was surprised to see her.

"She had not realized how much time had gone by and didn't mean to make people worry," Eastman said.

They gave Jackson-Crain a phone to call her grandmother.

"I told her, 'send a smoke signal and we will come,'" Eastman said. "I brought her grandmother's prayers and reminded her she is loved. We all go through things and we're never not deserving of love, compassion and kindness. I hope she felt the love I brought down to her."

Jackson-Crain did not return to Grand Ronde with the Eastman family.

Freeman, who has been raising awareness within the Grand Ronde

community concerning Missing and Murdered Indigenous People issues, said they are, "meeting her where she is at."

"The first goal is to make sure she is okay and not in danger, and bring her home when she is ready," Freeman said.

The area Jackson-Crain was found was the same stretch of California where Tribal member Heather Cameron-Haller went missing in 2012.

"Driving home all we could do was pray for the Haller family," Eastman said. "It resurfaced a lot of empathy for their pain."

According to Tribal Police Chief Jake McKnight, Jackson-Crain remained a missing person in the Law Enforcement Data System until police made contact with her.

Tribal Police announced it had made contact with Jackson-Crain on Monday, Feb. 26, via its Facebook page

"Update! Found safe!" it said. "Thank you Detective Tehama and Corporal Brown for driving down to California in order to find Tenatia Jackson-Crain." ■

Tribe has been considering new third-party administrator since 2022

SHASTA continued
from front page

According to its website, Forest County Potawatomi specializes in benefits administration services for Tribal nations, focusing on utilizing federal resources available to Tribes and thus minimizing Tribal dollars spent. The benefits administration includes claim processing for medical, dental, vision, optical and prescription plans.

When asked if employees and Tribal members could expect timely claims processing with the new administrator, Executive Director of Health Services Kelly Rowe said yes.

"They have very high rates of claims processing and are good at what they do," she said. "We're hoping the transition will be as seamless as possible."

Tribal Finance Officer Chris Leno, who serves as a trustee of the employee health plan, said the Tribe has been considering a different third-party administrator since late 2022.

"We want good customer service on the employee side and the Tribal member side, and efficient, timely claims processing," he said.

Harvey added that with 7,000 people covered on both the employee and Tribal member plans, the Tribe will remain involved with Shasta during the transition.

"The Tribe is interested in the successful administration of claims under our plans and will be involved until we have transitioned to a new TPA," she said. "They (Shasta) have caught up on claims for the most part and most of their software issues have been resolved. However, the company has lost clients and is in financial hardship. They have largely relied on loans from (Tribally-owned business) Upqwena to fund operational expenses it cannot cover."

On the business side, the Tribe still owns 51% of Shasta, purchased in November 2012 with Hawaii-Western Management Group, which owns 49%. The pur-

chase price was not disclosed.

Then-Tribal Economic Development Director Titu Asghar said the purchase made sense in the Tribe's pursuit of diversifying its non-gaming businesses because the company was already processing claims for the Tribe's self-funded health plans.

"Since that time, Shasta has achieved steady growth and maintained our reputation of integrity, quality, value and service at a competitive price," the company states on its website.

The Tribe has made several loans to Shasta through Upqwena since 2022 to help the company with ongoing operational expenses and alleviating backlogged claims. To date, it has provided nearly \$1.6 million. Shasta is required to pay back the loans in full.

In Oct. 2023, then-Tribal Economic Development Director Bruce Thomas said that the Tribe was seeking to sell Shasta.

"We're exploring that," he said. "It's an industry where efficiency and economies of scale are critical. And what's happening is that industry is consolidating with bigger and bigger operators. It's hard for us with the

number of clients that we have with that organization to really generate the profit we were hoping for."

Tribal Communications Director Sara Thompson said Shasta has not yet been sold.

"There was a prospective buyer last fall but it withdrew after completing its due diligence," she said. "Others have expressed interest in acquiring Shasta but no formal offer has been received from them."

Employees are asked to contact Tribal Benefit & Risk Manager Tammy Gould at 503-879-2031 for more information.

Tribal members with questions about Skookum coverage should call Tribal Health Benefits Specialist Barbara Steere at 503-879-2487 or Tribal Business Office Manager Melody Baker at 503-879-2011.

Additionally, a Shasta update meeting was held in executive session for Tribal members only on Tuesday, Feb. 20.

All questions about claims can be directed to Shasta at 1-800-880-5877. Updated insurance cards will be sent out when the Tribe completes its transition to the new third-party administrator. ■

TRIBAL VETERANS SERVICE OFFICE

Scheduled Appointments Only
Monday
Tuesday

Walk-In Day
Thursday

To schedule an appointment:
Call (503) 879-1424 or
CTGR Tribal VSO @ GrandRonde.Org

Drop box installed

The Grand Ronde Tribal Police Department, 9655 Grand Ronde Road, has a medication drop box located in the front lobby.

Lobby hours are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday.

The drop box is for any prescribed or over-the-counter medication. If the containers are too large to fit in the drop box, please repackage them in a zip-lock plastic bag. Tribal Police employees cannot handle the medications so the person dropping them off must repackage them.

Needles and liquids are not allowed in the drop box.

Tribal Police suggest mixing liquid medications with cat litter or coffee grounds and then throwing them away with the household trash.

For more information, call 503-879-1821. ■