

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

To the editor:

It has been almost a year since the Council allowed me, my husband, and our foster daughter, Princess, to get up at the Tribal Council meeting and tell our story about our great niece who is in a non-family, non-Indian foster home in Bozeman, Mont. A lot of my family was there to support us. Unfortunately, our niece, Celestial, is still in the same foster home.

The foster parents are prominent people in the Bozeman community with lots of connections. The foster mother is director of a children's services facility that does extensive work with the state of Montana Children's Services Division. The father is a prominent cattle rancher. They were voted foster family of the year in Bozeman. They want to adopt our niece even though they know she is Siletz Indian and that the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) is supposed to protect the rights of Indian children.

We have been available for placement since July 1997. We have been approved for adoption through the state of Oregon and the Siletz Tribe. Bozeman DPHHS and the non-native foster family all seem to think they know what is best for our Siletz Indian great-niece. They have sidestepped and played legal games with ICWA.

The county judge ruled against ICWA and us in January 1999. We have appealed the decision to the Montana Supreme Court. Since that time, another baby was born by the same birth mother of Celestial. Her name is Stormie. Oregon SCF took her from the birth mother at the hospital and Stormie was placed with us on March 1, 1999. The birth mother has asked us to adopt and we have agreed. It is now even more important for Celestial to be placed with us because her sister, Stormie, will be permanently adopted by us. We are involved

To the editor:

In a recent issue of Smoke Signals, the excellent publication of the Grand Ronde Tribe, I read that they provide their elders (those 55 and older) with a monthly pension of \$500. The Grand Ronde Tribe is to be commended for their caring initiative. But as members of the Confederated Siletz Tribes, we should be ashamed that we provide our elders with a mere \$100 Christmas trinket.

It is our elders who have suffered the most among our membership during the years of the 1920s-90s, doing without so that their children and grandchildren might have food and clothing. Let's encourage all our Siletz Tribal

in our culture and will raise these children knowing their heritage.

In January when the judge in Bozeman ruled against us and ICWA, he advised if we were going to appeal that it should be expedited. We and the Siletz Tribe filed appeals in February 1999. The foster family and the county attorney have already filed and received an extension. This is the third extension that has been requested since August 1998. These extensions drag out the case and only benefit the foster family's case. This does not help us and certainly is not in the best interest of our niece, Celestial.

We have been granted supervised visitations and have traveled to Bozeman several times. The foster family is unwilling to meet us halfway, so we have to drive to Bozeman. The trip is around 16 hours. It has been very difficult, but we have had one visit a month since January. Stormie has been able to meet her big sister, Celestial, who is now 2 years old. Both times, Stormie has been in awe of her big sister and vice versa. I feel there is definitely a family bond.

This case should not be taken lightly. This is a prime example of the state of Montana breaking an Indian treaty. Montana has not complied with ICWA from the start. If they win this case, it will weaken ICWA for all of our native people.

We are hopeful that they will give us back our niece so she can grow up with her sister and they can grow up knowing and living their native culture as I have and our son has and his children will. If anyone wants to help, you can send a letter of protest to Gov. Marc Racicot, State Capitol, Helena MT 59620-0801 or Chuck Hunter, Administrator of Children's Services, DPHHS - Montana, PO Box 80005, Helena, MT 59604. Thank you.

Tina Ehret

Council members to work swiftly to enact legislation mirroring that of the Grand Ronde Tribe in their elder pension funding.

In a separate matter, the electronic mail system of the Siletz Tribe is leaving much to be desired. Why is there not a directory of e-mail addresses published periodically in the Siletz News? Why are e-mails not being delivered to the Siletz e-addresses (such as newspaper@ctsi.nsn.us) when sent from outside of the Siletz system (such as from America Online subscribers)?

Rick Dodds
Rogue River Shasta

LETTERS, DEADLINES AND SUBSCRIPTIONS

All letters received will be printed except those that are slanderous or racist. Please type or write legibly. No profane language will be printed. The Siletz News and Tribal government accept no responsibility for statements made in these letters. The opinions expressed are those of the individuals writing them. Letters that are excessive in length may be edited for length as approved by Tribal Council Resolution #96-142. **All letters must include your name, address, phone number, and signature.**

Send letters to:

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Please note: The general manager of the Siletz Tribe is the editor-in-chief of the Siletz News.

Editor-in-Chief: Brenda Bremner
Editor: Diane Rodriguez

Deadline for the August/September newsletter is Aug. 10. Photos are encouraged. Everyone loves to see photos of events, tribal members, and especially babies. Don't forget those birthday or anniversary wishes for loved ones.

The newsletter is free to enrolled Siletz Tribal members. For all others, a \$12 annual subscription fee applies. Fill out this form and mail it with \$12 (make check payable to Confederated Tribes of Siletz) to Siletz News.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: (____) _____

For a change of address on your newsletter: Tribal members call Lisa Norton, enrollment clerk, at 541-444-8258; all others, call the newsletter office at 541-444-8291 and leave your new address with the editor or on the voice mail.