

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

To the editor:

Throughout Indian country, the most successful tribes are those that support programs to enhance their memberships' lives. Honoring our elders by assuring that all their health and housing needs are met and encouraging our youth to succeed by supporting all their educational needs are basic priorities in all tribes ... except for ours. And, it doesn't have to be this way.

The Tribal Council spends well over \$2 million each year and what benefits have we the membership received to justify the cost? What's more important – almost the entire council traveling to meetings all over the nation or assisting our membership when there are definite needs? It's unfortunate that elders must work to supplement their Social Security just to pay their household bills while millions of dollars are being spent without control or conscience.

I've made a proposal a number of times at General Council meetings, but it has been ignored. If any of our programs have a shortfall, the Tribal

Council budget should be reduced to make up for the need. I challenge the Tribal Council to act on this proposal in the form of a resolution and to inform the membership of those who vote against it.

Another area that I have discussed many times is the need for information. I have proposed over and over that the General Council meetings be more informative. The membership should receive up-to-date written reports from the Tribal Council on their activities for the period since the last General Council on their time, travel, and other expenditures, as well as any action that affects or will affect our tribe.

I believe that the overspending and misspending need to be redirected toward meeting the basic needs of our membership and enhancing the lives of each and every member. Elders, health care, and education should be real priorities as they are with other tribes. There needs to be a change if we are to be a successful tribe.

Sincerely,  
Pat Duncan

To the editor:

At the May General Council, there was much discussion about concerns and actions to address them:

- Understanding casino financial reports received a lot of attention and council was asked to hold periodic meetings with a knowledgeable moderator to review these with the membership.
- Providing health care to out-of-service-area members was brought up, with the suggestion that council and administration reduce this objective to a written plan that identifies the objective, the tasks, and the deadlines/time frame for carrying out the plan. And, that members receive regular reports on what is being accomplished.
- It was requested and council agreed that administration could coordinate a fund-raising effort to help tribal WWII veterans attend the WWII Memorial Ceremony (slated for 2002 possibly) in Washington, D.C. A related request was to tap into existing federal programs for veteran's benefits.
- Through an advisory vote, tribal members requested that council change the General Council meeting agenda format to provide program information before tribal member concerns. It was also suggested that reports be provided by program managers with specified time limits on the agenda.
- Defining the tribe's water rights status was a concern, as well as increasing efforts to enhance the river for the eels and fish.
- Assisting Chemawa school to improve student success rates and developing Chemawa lands to benefit the students was another concern.
- There were also concerns about tribal personnel policies – Family Medical Leave and background checks – negatively impacting tribal member employment opportunities.

These are the highlights of what I remember from the meeting. Although General Council minutes will come out later, I wanted members to know what a productive meeting this was. I encourage tribal members interested in any of these or other issues to take the time to write a "Dear Tribal Council member" letter raising your concerns and especially to offer your solutions and ideas.

Respectfully,  
Bonnie M. Petersen

To the editor:

A TERO ordinance (Tribal Rights Employment Ordinance) is similar to a union. The purpose of TERO is to commit the tribe to employ, train, and hire tribal members for **all** positions, including gaming. We would have a strict tribal member hiring preference.

Tribal members would submit their name and when a position or contract became available, tribal administration or gaming would call the TERO coordinator, who would identify tribal members who were qualified for the position. The TERO coordinator(s) would also be involved with identifying individuals who wanted to be trained for certain positions and then develop a true training program for tribal members to move into those positions.

However, to do a TERO Ordinance, we must believe tribal members have the ability to run our own tribe. The biggest obstacle is the fact that we discriminate against each other. We do this by the way we set up our ordinances, hiring, and firing procedures.

We say we want to support and employ our tribal members, but if you

notice in the personnel manual, both gaming and administration, and the fact there is **no** tribal member preference, we see our actions don't match our words.

How can we tell? First, the tribal attorney drafted a TERO ordinance back in 1993-1994. It was decided this gave tribal members too much leverage when it came to employment, so it was shelved. Second, if there's a personnel issue or grievance regarding a position, we have little recourse in getting it heard on a timely basis. In fact, in the personnel manual, the general manager has complete control over the grievance process and if you appeal, the same person who made the final decision, namely the general manager, hears your appeal!

Third, changes have been made to the Tribal Court rules of procedure again, which reduce Tribal Court's jurisdiction in hearing matters concerning Tribal Council or tribal administration.

Lastly, the greatest indicator we don't want tribal members working for our tribe is the fact we haven't

conducted a resource assessment of our tribal members. If we were truly serious about wanting tribal members to run our tribe, a resource assessment is a necessity.

I believe tribal members can run our tribe, whether it's in administration, gaming, or the clinic. Yes, we need to train and develop our members. The greatest indicator that we are creating barriers rather than bridges is the fact that we haven't set up a system or TERO organization that commits to tribal member employment and advancement. I see at gaming and administration a trend where rules are used to exclude tribal members rather than to include them.

Ray Blacketer

To the editor:

I was wondering about the \$100 revenue we received at the first of the year. If there are only 3,000+ tribal members and the timber \$2.2 million, why would each member receive only \$100? It makes me wonder what people are thinking in their thoughts.

I have a 4-year-old daughter who's a member of the tribe and she's growing so fast, the clothes and shoes I bought for her with the \$100 are already too small. And another thing, Grand Ronde got a \$3,000 Christmas bonus and we got a big zero.

Something is wrong with this picture to me. Anyway, tell me what you think.

Sincerely,  
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