

Letters

Dear *Smoke Signals*,

I would like to personally thank Tribal Council member Jack Giffen, Jr. and Vernon Kennedy for their efforts in making sure the Tribal Elders were safe during the recent snow storm. Both Jack and Vernon called my home to make sure I was doing good and had everything I needed. Your efforts did not go unnoticed.

Also on another note, thank you to the Public Information Office for all the nice, colorful photos used in the *Smoke Signals*.

Sincerely,

Gene Hudson

Roll #273

Dear Editor,

I would like to thank the Tribe, as well as apologize to the Contract Health staff, for sending me to the Tribe's partner optician, Eagle Eye Optical, here in Portland. I needed new eyeglasses and this was not the eye doctor of my choosing. I thought I was getting shortchanged and I expressed that to Contact Health staff. Boy! Was I wrong. The glasses are the best I've had for a long time, the frames are perfect and I have no headache like the last three pairs of glasses gave me. This is not the best part of this experience, Eagle Eye Optical is owned and operated by a Tribal member, with a name like Eagle Eye, I should have known there was something Native about the place. Maybe that's why I have no headache. Being treated with respect and care can do that for you.

Thank you again,

Dave Brumitt

Roll# 3407

Dear Editor,

The Grand Ronde Tribal Housing Authority just completed a project to fix up my old house, which desperately needed some TLC, in part because a huge black-walnut tree in front of my place had fallen on my porch. Thanks to the home-repair grant for low-income Tribal members (a compliment to the Tribal program to help members purchase their first homes), my house just got rebuilt porches, new energy-efficient doors, new siding and a new coat of paint. Linda Layden, Don Coon and everyone at the Tribal Housing Authority were great to work with, especially since we had some unexpected delays, including waiting for the insulation to be installed by the Bonneville Power Administration and the recent intense snowstorms. (If any Tribal members are interested, BPA now has funds available to insulate the houses of low-income American Indians in Oregon through the community-action weatherization programs in each county).

I often get yelled at about Indian casinos, especially the one proposed for the Columbia Gorge, where I was an environmental activist for many years (including helping the Tribes save rivers and restore salmon runs). But after I explain to the critics about where our casino profits are going (i.e., health insurance for Tribal members, scholarships, pensions for Tribal Elders, housing programs, a new Wellness Center and long-term investments for after gaming revenues decline—as well as the millions we give to non-profits), they're usually lamenting that they don't have elected governments with such good priorities.

Just before we got Tribal health insurance, I got real sick (from the type of bacterial pneumonia that killed Jim Hensen of the Muppets) and almost died. I miraculously recovered physically after complicated operations and three weeks in and out of the state hospital, but the illness left me in such financial ruins that if it wasn't for my Tribal Elder's pension, I probably would have ended up homeless. I had \$50,000 of medical bills (which contract health thankfully helped with), but I couldn't work for many months and couldn't get unemployment because I'm self-employed, so I lost many of my possessions. But thanks to my monthly Elders' pension and old friends, I was able to save my house (which just got spruced up) and my car, so I'm doing just fine. And now I have health insurance from the Tribe, which is especially important to those of us who are self-employed artists and couldn't possibly afford health insurance these days.

So I want to sincerely thank all the Grand Ronde Tribal leaders past and present — including my father's great-grandfather, who signed the 1855 Willamette Valley (Grand Ronde) Treaty a few months before being hanged by then Lt. Phil Sheridan and the U.S. Army — for their great foresight. While we sometimes get bogged down in Tribal politics and bickering, our Tribal Council's decisions have shown great vision and have made many lives so much better, mine included, in ways we could only dream about back when we finally got restored. Many thanks!

Chuck Williams

Roll # 1799

Office Closures

Tribal offices will be closed on February 16 in observance of President's Day.

Correction — In the February 1, 2003 issue of *Smoke Signals*, we misidentified Steven Schussman and Randy Thayer. We apologize for this mistake.

Smoke Signals 2004 Deadlines

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DEADLINE DATE ISSUE DATE

Fri., Feb. 20	MAR. 1
Fri., Mar. 5	MAR. 15
Fri., Mar. 19	APR. 1
Mon., Apr. 5	APR. 15
Mon., Apr. 19	MAY. 1
Wed., May 5	MAY. 15
Fri., May 21	JUN. 1
Fri., Jun. 4	JUN. 15
Fri., Jun. 18	JUL. 1
Fri., Jul. 2	JUL. 15
Mon., Jul. 19	AUG. 1
Thurs., Aug. 5	AUG. 15
Fri., Aug. 20	SEP. 1
Fri., Sep. 3	SEP. 15
Fri., Sep. 17	OCT. 1
Tues., Oct. 5	OCT. 15
Wed., Oct. 20	NOV. 1
Fri., Nov. 5	NOV. 15
Wed., Nov. 17	DEC. 1
Fri., Dec. 3	DEC. 15
Thurs., Dec. 16	JAN. 1, 2005

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