

2004 Candidate Statements

that cost two Tribal members their jobs. Now, you can be fined for talking politics on Tribal land and insulting a Council member.

Indian #1: *No, I don't believe that. Ridiculous!*

Me: Uh-oh! Sounds like somebody hasn't read the newly amended Public Safety Ordinance.

Indian #2 (looks at Indian #1): *I don't like the way he said that.*

Me: Look, you guys. I don't have all the answers. Sure I sound negative at times, but look at all of what has happened, it's understandable. The Tribe has simply lost its way, because Tribal members, "the people", have lost their voice. There are no longer debates at Council meetings. There are no laws that hold Council accountable for their actions. We have no reliable source of information. Heck, there is no longer an "open door" policy. You now need permission to enter Council chambers.

Indian #1: *Your words ring true. Things used to be better. I once felt like my opinion, my voice mattered. What happened?*

Me: Our leadership quit caring. Our Council makes too much money and has too much power. All it takes now is a Council majority to do something. Even if the other 4995 Tribal members disagree with a decision, business or legal, the deciding factor is still the opinions of five Council members. You put \$80 million worth of economic and legal power into the hands of so few people; well... you get corruption, greed, and neglect.

Indian #2: *Kind of like that "Lord of the Rings" movie, where everybody who uses the ring becomes evil and greedy.*

Me: Um. I guess that's a good comparison. Absolute power corrupts absolutely.

Indian #1: *How can we fix things?*

Me: You can start by voting, preferably for me. And you can start asking questions and begin to educate yourself on what is *really* happening in Grand Ronde. While you're here, I'm gonna tell what every Tribal member should know. You'll never look at the Tribe the same way again. It'll blow your mind.

Indians: *All right! Now it's getting good.*

Me: Did you know...

Unfortunately, I can't go too far beyond 600 words. If you are interested in what I told those two Indians that night, please visit my website: ChrisMercier.com

Thank you,

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Wesley West

My name is Wesley "Buddy" West. I'm again a candidate for Tribal Council. Before you mark your ballot this year, please consider the possibility that there are those on Council who have been there too long. Consider the possibility that there needs to be new voices on Council, if for nothing else than to give balance to our system of government, which has become very one-sided.

Majority control has been the Council norm for some time. To secure their positions, they first passed the rule that no matter how the votes fell on a decision, once it became known to the membership, they would declare the decision unanimous. Why? Because, when membership objects to a decision, each of them could point a finger at the other Council and deny responsibility for the decision. Council also took control of the only communication media the membership had; the Tribal newspaper. Then, to eliminate the threat of one Council member ratting on another, they abolished the Tribal Ethics Ordinance thereby eliminating any accountability on their part. Finally, they amended our Tribal Safety Ordinance to give themselves a larger advantage in the election process and virtually eliminate the Civil Rights of the Membership.

This brings to mind the treatment of our ancestors, who were considered heathens, and because they were heathens, didn't have the same rights as their oppressors. Only the "real people" had rights. Our ancestors communicated with each other using whispers and secrecy, because they were punished for speaking their language and feared the reprisals of those in power. Doesn't this seem familiar somehow?

Today, our Tribal Nation is directed by five Council members, popularly referred to as the "Big Five" who are accountable to no one. As a result, trust in the decisions of our Tribal government has been replaced with fear of personal reprisals and fear for the long-term stability of the



Tribe. In the past, this fear has kept many silent, but things are changing.

What is different this year, is an Internet Networking system is helping Tribal members to understand they are not alone, that there are many who feel as they do, and they share concerns.

The realization that there is strength in numbers gives hope to many that we, the people, can break up the Big Five. Tribal members are becoming involved and more aware of the day to day decisions of Tribal Council. They are beginning to realize the only thing we have left is our right to vote. How we vote this year will shout a loud message to Tribal Council.

I believe I can make a positive difference for you on Tribal Council because I'm not a career politician. Career politicians care more about keeping their position than about doing the job they were elected to do. They've served in office for a long time, and over time, have learned to care more about themselves than about you. I won't make empty promises or give special favors to certain families. If you are to believe anything you hear from me, I would like it to be this: I'm frustrated on behalf of all of us. I want change on behalf of all of us. And I will spend the next three years with all of us in mind, guiding me in my daily actions.

Please know that I'm available to speak with you on any subject you'd like to discuss. Write to me at 404 NE Faulconer St., Sheridan, OR 97378. My e-mail is dee_wes@hotmail.com. I look forward to hearing from you, and I thank you for taking time to read this letter.

Wesley (Buddy) West
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Linda Olson

Linda Bean Olson

I am respectfully asking for your support in my effort to represent the membership on Tribal council. I grew up at the base of Spirit mountain on my family's allotments, up until termination then my family moved throughout the coast and the valley.

I married young and now have four grown children and many grandchildren. As a sometimes single parent and a dislocated native person I have learned, through experience, that family and a strong sense of self is vital for us as a native people to make it in the mainstream society. I have worked in many fields ranging from medical care, social services, Alcohol and drug counseling, education, retail and construction business.

With many years of experience working for and with the Tribe, I have a few ideas I would like to work towards, but I feel the most important skill I bring is open mindedness and the ability to be non-judgmental.

I believe strongly that to represent the membership is an honor. Some of the ideas I would like to work for are: developing a strong culture through a museum, language, ceremonies, and long house for a beginning; encouraging a sense of community with activities on the weekends and evenings with families and youth; encouraging strong leadership by providing classes for members interested in becoming council representatives, having group meetings where the membership can openly give input and opinions; having a monthly meeting in other communities such as Portland, Salem or Eugene where there is a concentration of members as to make council more accessible; developing a separate entity to decide council salary raises.

These are some of the things I will be working on if I am elected to council. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
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