

## Letters

Dear *Smoke Signals*,

I appreciate this opportunity to introduce myself. I am Susan Gramentz, mother of Walter (Butch) Simmons Tribal member #2317. It looks like I need the Creator's help big time today. I have lost plenty of sleep over the last nine months. It has been very stressful going to court, and fighting for my son's rights to keep his daughter. Butch refuses to sign legal papers to give up his rights as a parent while incarcerated.

Butch is going through a very difficult period in his life right now and I wish to ask for emotional and financial support from his family. I am also asking the same of the Tribe. At this point anything will help. We would greatly appreciate any letters sent to the court before his trial. We hope to flood that courtroom with letters testifying that my son does not deserve for his sacred rights as a father to be stripped from him. He just needs his family to write and send a few bucks every now and then. Stamps wouldn't hurt either!! Dad, cousins, uncles, aunts, all of you. He needs you! Butch also has requested a pen pal from the Tribe. This situation has become too painful for him to bear alone. Butch has never wanted to bring shame to his Tribe for being in prison, which is why we've waited so long to ask for help. In fact it wasn't until our last visit together on the 21st of August that he consented to me writing this letter.

I currently live off Social Security and a widow's pension. Butch and I sincerely need your help. He has a kind heart and has always shown remorse for his wrong doings. Butch has helped me out greatly while in prison by buying me a much needed car, sending money home to help me so that it could be possible for me to see him and by simply being a wonderful son. Butch has never wanted for me to go without, yet we still find ourselves in this hole. I can no longer go and visit like I used to — we simply don't have the money and we both need these visits to hold each other up in spirit.

Butch and I started this journey almost a year ago this October. Butch has cried many tears and felt much heartache as a result of this conflict. Butch's children are the closest thing to his heart and he would never dream of willingly losing one of them.

Please, I ask of you to get involved and help stop what could become a tragedy.

Send money directly to:

Attorney David Martin  
8795 Folsom Blvd Suite 106  
Sacramento, CA 95826

or

Walter F. Simmons P-78257  
Salinas Valley State Prison  
A-2-112

P.O. Box 1030

Soledad, CA 93960-1030

Susan can be reached for information on the trial at 1-530-621-3244

Letter written to the Presiding Judge

Case #03AD00616

Superior Court Of California, County of Sacramento

Courtroom 124

3341 Power Inn Road

Sacramento, CA 95826

Dear Editor,

First of all, I'm so proud to be the daughter of Val Grout. She has contributed so much to our Tribe and is the least greedy person I know, she has always been the one to volunteer herself and us girls to do the funeral dinners, it's kinda traditional now. Also, fundraising for our Veterans, families in distress, anyone in need could come to her and she would do her best to help them out. If you were family or friend from here you would know that! She has earned much respect from Grand Ronde people and what has happened to the younger people, they don't seem to have the respect we grew up with. Most of all respect for our Elders, most of them are sharper than any college education that you can get. It comes so easy for me and my family to love and respect our Elders. They teach us every time you talk to them. Too bad people, not Tribal has nothing better to do than to destroy family and life long friendships by sending out e-mails and letters so slanderous, it's a lot of misinformation. You need someone more reliable to get your information from. You're hundreds of miles from here and you know things I never heard of unless it's rumors! Also, using our local newspaper to let everyone know you are not happy about something! Come on, we already get enough negativity from local non-Tribal people. The Indians are fighting amongst each other again. I pray that elections don't get worse every year! Don't listen to someone so far away that is hateful and gets information through e-mails. Sure, we can use help not negative help. Look at what you have, it's more than most Tribes! Thank you Tribal Council past and present for all you gave to the Tribe. Focus on the good not just the mistakes because they are human. Be thankful don't destroy it by hateful negatives and again thanks to our Tribal employees, Tribal and non-Tribal, they work very hard. Good luck new council members as an employee, I know you can't please everyone.

**Sharon Grout**

Roll #1163

Dear Editor,

I would like to thank my supporters in this year's Tribal Elections. I am very honored and humbled at the same time by having the support of many Tribal Elders whom I have a tremendous deal of respect for. I would also like to commend the candidates who did not resort to negative campaigning. I believe it is a sad time in Grand Ronde history when the media is used to smear our Tribe for personal gain, when e-mail lists and websites are used to discredit candidates, when exaggerations, inaccuracies and outright lies are told to further one's political standing and when anonymous letters are mailed to attack one's character. I can't imagine our ancestors would condone such behavior and I as a Tribal member am ashamed of the behavior of some of my people. Evidently the majority of the voting Tribal membership believes this type of campaigning is acceptable. To the newly elected Tribal Council members, I wish you luck. My prayers will be with you and my prayers will be with the future of our people. I hope and pray that our children do not grow-up thinking that it's okay to attack people or that it's okay to lie and exaggerate; but rather that they are instilled with the values of our ancestors: honesty, integrity and respect.

Konaway Nayka Tillicum,

**Elaine LaBonte**

Roll #2271

Dear Editor,

I want to congratulate those recently elected to the Tribal Council and thank all the candidates for the time you put into our Tribal election process. Those who serve the Tribe on Tribal Council have an enormous responsibility and will face a challenging three years with the many complex decisions facing our Tribe these days. Because serving on Tribal Council is such an important job the Tribal membership needs to have as much information as we can get about the candidates. As a Tribal member who moved away from the Willamette Valley two years ago I am realizing how difficult it is for Tribal members who are not near Grand Ronde to learn about the background and experience of the candidates unless that is one of the topics they address in their letters to Tribal members or in their statement in the newspaper. With so many Tribal members living away from the Reservation, I know I am not the only one with this challenge.

I suggest that in the edition of the newspaper just before the edition containing the candidate's statements all candidates be given the opportunity to answer a set of questions that would provide information about their background and experience. It would be a purely voluntary option for the candidates and any candidate not wishing to answer would not have to. These questions would give the membership the kind of information that someone might fill out in the background section for a job application. After all, by their candidacy they are essentially applying to the membership for a very important job.

I suggest that all candidates be given the opportunity to provide the following information:

■ Have you worked with the CTGR or other Tribal governments either professionally or in another capacity?

■ Other work experience

■ Have you participated in committees or other activities with the Grand Ronde Tribe?

■ Have you worked with federal, state or local governments?

■ Educational background

■ What do you think are the three most important issues facing the Tribe today? (This question would be answered by brief one paragraph answers).

I think that these six pieces of information about every candidate who wished to give it would provide a helpful background to the membership. I do not mean to suggest that it is necessarily the most important information about candidates either. Some candidates give some of this information in their statements but they understandably only have so much space in the paper to be able to summarize the messages that they think are most important. If we got most of the background information in one paper, then the candidates could concentrate on other messages in their statements. I think this would be a huge help to all Tribal members but especially to the many who cannot attend the candidates' forums or may not know all of the candidates. *Smoke Signals*, please offer the opportunity to answer these candidate background questions to future candidates. Tribal members, if you think this is information that would be useful to you please let the Tribe know.

Thank you,

**Kathleen Feehan**

Roll #2093

Dear Editor,

I wish to extend a very sincere and heartfelt "Thank You" to those special people who encouraged, supported and voted for me in this year's Tribal Council Elections. A very special thank you to Julie Brown who was always there for me, rather it be for moral support, her knowledge and wisdom or to just listen. I ran an honorable, positive campaign and would never be a part of anything less than that. I will continue to support and contribute to our Tribal membership in any positive avenue that is needed. It is vital that we work together for the continued success of the Tribe's future and with that said, it leaves no room for personal agendas or getting even.

Respectfully submitted,

**Diana George**

Roll #175