

Letters

Dear Tribal Family:

When I look back on the history of our race of Native peoples, I see love, respect and self-sufficiency, all with the honor of the Creator. We took our appointment of protectors of the Mother Earth seriously, guiding us in our daily walk. By hard work, our Native ancestors provided food and shelter for their families, Elders and children. Hunting, gathering and even warfare were done with prayer and honor. The whole Tribe was recognized as family. When the white men killed our people to take our lands, the conscience of the government prompted "protection" for our people by legal treaties that took our homelands, and they rounded us up and removed us to Grand Ronde. The treaties promised us a permanent homeland, health care and education opportunities for our people.

Through the years, our reservation was broken up, bit by bit. Our reservation acres were taken away because the government said we didn't need so much land. Again, by conscience, the government allowed us rights to govern ourselves. Our reservation government had always been enforced, with the approval of the U.S. government. We were allowed to believe that our Tribal government was effective, but the reality is that we were always manipulated by the U.S. government, given the right to vote on the U.S. government's suggestions and limited choices. Finally, the U.S. government reneged on its promise for our protection and terminated our recognition as Indian people.

Our reservation was no more. No reservation?! No Indian people?! Why then are we referred to as "chief," "half-breed," "squaw," etc.? Even having my blessed mother, Ruth, who was white, no one ever said that I was "part-white." Usually it was "part-Indian." The Indian in me was always pointed out. By the government's standard, my Indian family did not exist due to Termination. My Dad and three older siblings are listed as "Indian" on their birth certificates, but myself and four younger siblings are listed as "white" race. The whites will not let us be white, and without the honor and protection of our Tribe, I was a tormented and lost soul. Presently, we are enforcing the U.S. government's method of labeling our Tribal people ... by fractions. One-half, 1/16th, etc. It's hurtful and derogatory.

When our Tribe was restored, it gave me an identity, a bonding with my extended family and a job that makes me want to reach out and help my neighbor. When we re-organized to fight for our Tribal Restoration/recognition, the purpose was to claim our rights of health care and education opportunities, promised by the treaties, to support self-sufficiency, and the right to govern ourselves. To be self-sufficient, by my own effort, I can make a living, provide a home for my family and a helping hand when needed. The Tribe can do this by helping me stay healthy, give me an opportunity to learn skills for a livelihood and supplemental programs for other needs.

The Restoration effort was never intended to provide means to fully support me. It was intended to help me bring myself up. There was so much pride and happiness after we were restored as a Tribe, a true family bonding occurred throughout our Tribe.

Programs were developed to provide health care, to raise housing standards, education opportunities and supplemental income for our Elders and disabled members. The supplemental income helps take care of those who we are bound by tradition to support. When we opened up our casino, greed replaced pride, people crying out for more individual monies, taking funds away from our programs.

I feel that our Tribe is in danger of extinction with per capita. Draining the Tribe's income to provide individual cash will, and is, endangering our programs. People cry out and blame the Tribal Council for the decrease in per capita. In these hard economic times, how can we expect the populations to keep putting money into our casino as it was three years ago? How can

the Tribal Council be responsible for the spending habits of the populations? Wake up, the Tribal Council does not control the economy. The Tribal Council and General Council can control what Tribal incomes we do have.

Sadly, in answer to the cry of more per capita, our Tribe has embraced alcohol for the money-making machine it is, to line our individual pockets. A sports bar and nightclub will provide entertainment, but support the addictions which infest our Tribe. We are supporting the killer of our Native people by endorsing alcohol and catering to individuals who want cash, disregarding the needs of the Tribe as a whole. Our members who suffer from domestic violence, child abuse and neglect, addictions to alcohol, drugs, gambling and co-dependency will lose the opportunity to heal spiritually, physically and emotionally. Our children who are victims of this generation will lose the self-sufficiency that our Tribe claims as a goal in its mission statement.

How many of you have lost a loved one due to lack of quality health care, addiction, suicide, substance abuse accidents and violent crimes? I, personally, have entered recovery from alcohol and prescription drug use by using the Tribe's Behavioral Health Program, which helps me to be self-sufficient and able to help others. Through the sweat lodge and my Christian faith, I am sober today. I was not able to purchase my sobriety and spiritual growth with a per capita check.

I'm sure we will be seeing an increased need of funds for our Burial Fund, addiction and child welfare programs/social services programs due to this Tribe's support of the destroyer of spirit, mind and body. Our highway that the casino is on has already been notoriously recognized as a danger zone, and now we pour the alcohol into the situation. When you get your next per capita check, remember the battered children, the depressed, the addicted and the Elders. Our current programs may not endure another generation if we drain our funds for individual monies.

If the cash means so much to individuals, then offer a choice between Tribal services or cash. I have received so much from cultural reinforcement, health care and behavioral health, the cash cannot come close to giving me the same results.

If we wish to recognize our Tribal family without discrimination, the greed must stop now. Turn to your Creator, develop your traditional values, reach out to grow spiritually and become self-sufficient. The Tribe is not intended to support you, but to help you. Let's not lose our focus to be self-sufficient, caring people, but truly be a Tribe.

With the spirit of the Creator and in the name of Jesus, I am respectfully yours.

Margo Mercier
Roll #885

Recycle center hours

The recycle center will be open during the following hours: 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays, and 8 a.m. to noon Saturdays.

We are sorry for any inconvenience this may cause you, but we have found it necessary to put tighter control on this service. NO ONE IS ALLOWED TO DUMP PERSONAL GARBAGE OR YARD DEBRIS AT THE SITE. If you see someone abusing this privilege, contact Mike Larsen at 503-879-2407.

Coordination of benefits saves the Tribe money

The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde provides health coverage to Tribal members under the Skookum Health Plan. Because the Skookum Health Plan is entirely funded by Tribal dollars, the plan must be as efficient as possible.

One of the ways that we can be more efficient is to verify if Tribal members have other health coverage. If a Tribal member has other insurance coverage such as an employer's health plan, Medicare or any other private insurance, those plans should pay for health care services before the Tribal plan pays. This saves the health plan money and ultimately benefits all Tribal members.

As a result, CTGR will be working with Shasta Administrative Services, the Tribe's new health care claims administrator, to verify health care coverage for all Tribal members. In most cases, any other coverage you may have, whether it is with an employer, a spouse's employer, other commercial insurance coverage or Medicare, should always be primary to Skookum. Tribal funds should always be the payor of last resort. In the next month, you will be receiving an audit letter from Shasta via the mail regarding other coverage. All Tribal members are required to return the completed form to Shasta. If your completed form is not returned to Shasta, within the designated time frame on the letter, then your claims will be denied until the information is received.

Our ultimate goal is to reduce the cost of health care for the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde and make sure resources are spent efficiently and effectively. If you have questions about anything you receive from Shasta or you need help with your health care claims, please contact them at 800-880-5877, e-mail to question@shastatpa.com or on the Web at www.shastatpa.com. Your help is appreciated. ■



ODOT Workforce Safety Trainings

First Aid / CPR
Date: Tuesday, May 26, 2009
Time: 9 A.M. - 1 P.M.
Place: CTGR Adult Education Room 126

Fall Protection & Confined Space/Competent Person
Date: Thursday, May 28, 2009
Time: 8 A.M. - 4 P.M.
Place: CTGR Adult Education Room 126

Trenching & Excavating Competent Person
Date: Thursday, May 29, 2009
Time: 9 A.M. - 1 P.M.
Place: CTGR Adult Education Room 126

All students who complete the class will receive a certificate.

Please contact Denise Harvey 503-879-2112

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