

Letters

Dear Tribal members and Tribal Council:

I am replying to the last letter in the *Smoke Signals*. This casino was not built just for the members to receive health benefits, education and these wasted programs that everybody have no use for. It was built for all the members to have a better way of life and not just the few that are benefiting.

The federal government gave money every year for our health and education and some of these programs they got going.

Even before they restored the Tribe in 1984, many of the members never knew that it was even there for their use. Only certain ones knew and they drained it dry.

It is the same today. The members don't even know what is going on and where all the money is going. If they only knew half of what is going on, they might have an uprising and get rid of this council that's in there now. These trips that the council members are going on to represent the Tribe, they are getting paid extra and it is quite a bit. The council are getting paid \$80,000 to more than \$100,000 a year. My question is why are they receiving extra for these trips to represent the Tribe? Isn't this part of their job? Because when they don't use it all they put the rest in their own pockets.

Plus there are some doing other jobs for the Tribe and getting paid with their other salary. So who is benefiting from all this? It sure is not the members.

Some of the members can't even get a job at the casino and if they do they only get paid \$8 to \$12 an hour. Why is this?

Plus there is so much fighting going on between the council members that business is not even being taken care of.

The members wanted a change a few years back and they got it, but they don't realize it was because of them that we lost all our money in the market. They were the ones that gave permission for the chief financial officer (he is no longer there) to put the Elders Pension Fund and the Children's Trust Fund out in the market. (It is not the ones that have the vote now).

The Elders Pension Fund used to be fully funded, but it's not no more. The Children's Trust Fund was in a safe place but it's not now and it's because they lost a lot of it in the market. The ones that turned 21 last year and this year are receiving the principal and that is less than half from what some of them got a couple of years back.

We need a Tribal Council that will be a voice for all members, not just for themselves and their own families. How many times are we going to sit back and watch our Children's Trust Fund and Elders Pension Fund be invested and lost.

Everybody needs to watch who they are voting for and make sure that they are for all members and not just for their own financial gain. Promises are made to be broken. If they start promising you that they will open the enrollment or have bigger per capita "RED FLAG" watch out because this will never happen. The ones that promised this the last time had never brought it up in the meetings or talked about.

We all need to wake up and hold our Tribal Council accountable for what they are doing and for allowing all this to happen. Or one day the membership is going to be told you are no longer going to get any per capita and all these programs, education and health benefits are no more. Because the cow was milked dry.

Delores J. Knight

Roll # 340

(Editor's Note: Mrs. Knight's letter contains some factual inaccuracies, including the Tribe's Restoration year; Tribal Council members are not paid "extra" for meetings they travel to; and that the Children's Trust Fund is not in a "safe place.")

Dear Tribal members:

This is in response to the letter written by Margo Mercier in the May 15, 2009, *Smoke Signals*.

Margo, in my opinion, has an inspiring Cinderella story to tell us, but as I read through it I felt compelled to respond to some of the issues she raised. I am one member who looks forward to and counts on the per-capita checks, not only for myself but for my family members who live outside of the six-county area. A member of my family is addicted to prescription pain medication. We would desperately love for her to go through the drug treatment program that Margo was fortunate to participate in, but it is not available to us since we don't live within the six-county area. The cost here in Spokane, Wash., is far too expensive to pay out-of-pocket. Insurance pays 80 percent, but the 20 percent participation still leaves it out of reach. All five of my children hold full-time jobs and often put in more than 50 hours per week. One of the many uses of the per-capita checks for us is to catch up from a long winter of excessive heat bills. At one point it reached \$600 for one month in my home.

No, the Restoration effort was never intended as a means to fully support Tribal members. However, our casino efforts were intended to help our Tribe become more self-sufficient. Margo stated that she is self-sufficient through her own efforts. Margo must not realize that her Tribal job and the living and home that she provides for her family are directly funded by revenue generated by our casino.

She stated that programs were developed to provide health care, raise housing standards and education opportunities. I think this is not true. These programs were designed to supplement and enhance those programs already promised by federal treaties that she spoke of earlier and are not always available to all Tribal members. I find it appalling that anyone would consider per capita as greed. Per capita is the one benefit distributed to all Tribal members without discrimination. And per capita is not an option but a requirement through our contract with the state.

Margo also said the Tribe should offer a choice between Tribal services and cash. This is a bias proposition. She stated how much she has received from different services. Unfortunately, these services are not always available to all of the Tribal membership. Wouldn't that be discriminatory? I highly respect Margo Mercier and this is in no way meant as a personal attack.

Jean Turman

Roll # 837

Native Youth Leadership and Athletic Academy

June 29-July 2, 2009

Eligible: CTGR youth ages 12-18 who want to develop their leadership and athletic skills.


Contact Shannon Simi at 503-879-1471 or shannon.simi@grandronde.org for an application.

Retirement blanket



Photo by Michelle Alaimo

Tribal Chairwoman Cheryle A. Kennedy, left, Tribal Council members Chris Mercier, second from left, and June Sell-Sherer, right, and Tribal Secretary Jack Giffen Jr., not pictured, presented Dallas Emch with a Tribal logo Pendleton blanket during the Willamette National Forest memorandum of understanding annual meeting at the Governance Center on Wednesday, May 20. Emch, a forest supervisor for the Willamette National Forest, is retiring from the U.S. Forest Service on May 29 after more than 30 years. He has worked with the Tribe through his position.



**The Confederated Tribes
of Grand Ronde
Youth Basketball Tournament**

June 26 - 29, 2009

CTGR Tribal Gymnasium

Ages: 15-18
Males Only
Mostly Native

8 participants per team

Awards:
1st place: Tournament jackets
2nd place: Hooded sweatshirts
3rd place: Gift certificates

\$200 registration fee per team
Contact Chris Labonte @ 503-879-1369 or
800-242-0232 for more information