

Letters

Dear Tribal members:

I am hoping that by the time you read this letter, your ballot for the constitutional election on enrollment will be nearby. I see this as another opportunity to let you know why a Tribal member might consider voting "yes."

It has been said that no matter what the outcome of this election, there will always be enrollment problems. I heartily disagree. The heart of this constitutional amendment we are asking people to vote on stems from the unintended consequences of the 1999 amendment. In 2005, Tribal Council called for the creation of the Enrollment Requirements Ad Hoc Committee to convene, research and subsequently identify problems with our enrollment requirements, which they did. Their recommendations moved forward in 2007-08 with another constitutional election of which only one of three proposed amendments passed. The two amendments that failed, proposed changes to language involving the definition of Grand Ronde blood and parent on the roll, both received majority support with roughly 60 votes separating them. The 2011 constitutional election still deals with those two issues, and includes a provision on enrollment limits to ease whatever fears voters may have over the supposed floodgates opening and wreaking havoc on our Tribal budgets.

In a nutshell, the amendment before you deals with the foremost problems we know were created by the 1999 amendment. It eliminates the technicalities that have caused the split families, but keeps intact the spirit of the previous amendment, which was to curb Tribal growth to a manageable level. Most important of all, this amendment brings consistency to our Tribal enrollment criteria. How our blood gets passed on will be equal for everybody.

I have yet to hear any reasonably good arguments against this amendment, mostly just innuendo, exaggerations and nitpicking over specific words. The obsession with the "bundle" is understandable, but if voters didn't support the separated amendments three years ago, what makes them more likely to pass now? Furthermore you'll hear arguments against what rolls and records would be used, or adding other Indian blood. The fact is we've used the wording "any roll or record" in the past, and we presently allow some members to count all their Indian blood.

I might also add that in 2008 the proposed definition of Grand Ronde blood would have only accounted for a fraction of the several hundred new enrollees.

The vast majority who would be able to enroll would do so if the parent on the roll language was changed. But it's all a moot point because if with the enrollment limit we have the ability to control how many people get enrolled every year.

My point is that aside from the financial impacts, which would be greater if there was not language for an enrollment limit, there really are few solid arguments for a "no" vote. Most "no" votes, my observation is thus far, come from people who have an ancestor on the Restoration Roll. This is a perfect example of two classes of people, one more fortunate than the other. I am part of that privileged class, if you want to call it that. But I don't want there to be classes of Tribal members.

We were all meant to be equals, and have the same enrollment requirements apply to us as such.

Christopher G. Mercier
Roll #1821

Dear Tribal members:

As we get into the final days of this constitutional election, I am hoping that those of you who haven't voted by now will consider voting "yes." That is what I plan to do.

I will be honest in saying that originally I was skeptical of this constitutional amendment, mainly because a number of Tribal Council members seemed intent on cramming the whole "parent on the roll" part down our throats. That bothered me because we are in a recession, and just the sheer amount of people who would be eligible to enroll in our Tribe from the "parent on the roll" language alone would strain our Tribal government greatly.

If you read the Tribal Facebook pages, you can see that some of the most adamant opposition comes from people worried about draining our resources should the amendments pass, the biggest impact of which would come from "parent on the roll" folks. So fairness issues aside, it didn't seem like the best time to force that language on us given the huge financial impact it would have.

I would guess millions of dollars in permanent additional costs to accommodate those new members, and probably their descendants. This did not seem like something voters would support during a recession. But, when I learned about the cap on annual enrollment, which is a part of the bundle, my fears were alleviated.

I am not worried about the proposed definition of Grand Ronde blood because, from what we've been told at the informational meetings, staff and Council know of 70 to 80 people who would be eligible to enroll, as opposed to roughly 300 for "parent on the roll." If those numbers aren't accurate, nobody on Council bothered to dispute them. Also, that language makes all of us who are Tribal members equal when passing on our Grand Ronde blood. Honestly, I am not sure what the arguments are against it. Maybe some people don't want equality? The civil rights movement was only 40 years ago, I suppose.

My point is that if the amendment passes as is, we will finally settle the

fallout from the 1999 amendment. Not only that, but we will still honor the intentions of the Council at that time who foresaw future problems with a rapidly growing Tribal population and acted in what they thought was the best interests of our Tribe.

So all told, this amendment is being conducted the right way from my point of view.

We can afford to gradually add the new enrollees. It is the right balance for those of us who want enrollment justice and for those scared of the potential flood of new members and what that would cost. Plus, it addresses all the present issues for the next few decades.

We have the chance to settle this once and for all.

Please vote "yes."

Jessica Wolpe
Roll #2629

Dear Grand Ronde Tribal members:

We as Tribal members are being forced to make a choice that is not really a choice. It is a flat yes or no vote on a multifaceted amendment to our Constitution.

Those of you who received and read my campaign letter know my stand on the bundled amendment. I firmly believe that our Tribal members should have had the opportunity to vote individually on all the issues. That alone, without a doubt, would have resolved the issue of the parent on the roll at the time of birth. This is something I believe with all my heart would have passed. But to try to force us to compromise our beliefs and our values on other major issues in this amendment is just an attempt to cram it down our throats and steal our voice. I firmly believe that it is a maneuver to manipulate us into voting for an amendment on which we have not been properly educated.

My question is why are we voting to reverse the Tribal jumper amendment we passed in 2008 with such an overwhelming majority? To vote on this again only makes us look foolish and unstable and as though we will flip-flop on important issues. Inserting this again into the amendment along with the other totally unrelated issues only serves to create a bungled amendment that is a strategy for failure.

What is right and fair about limiting enrollment from 2 percent to 5 percent of our total membership each year? We are told it is about controlling growth. All I can see is that the yearly membership growth could more than double any given year depending on the whims of council (as council changes every September). This is not stability. When I see such a broad disclaimer about the effects of the amendment as is written on page 12 in the October issue of the *Tilixam Wawa*, it makes me question the validity of the numbers presented.

Does anyone truly understand what the effects on our enrollment would be with the new definition of Grand Ronde blood? Do you feel you have been educated enough to understand what the new definition is or means? None of us will truly know until it is challenged in court and a smart lawyer will paint a whole new definition which will undoubtedly have immeasurable impacts on our Tribal membership. There is not enough money in our budget to accommodate all the cases that will be challenged when the enrollment audit is completed and implemented.

The "right" and "fair" way to control membership growth would have had a built-in control factor if we had been allowed to vote on these measures independently.

Radical overnight change is not always what is best in our Constitution.

The membership has not been fully educated about the total effects of this vote should the amendment pass.

We are building upon an enrollment base that is flawed.

The enrollment audit should have been completed and corrected before attempting to force this bungled amendment on our people.

Using "any" roll or record knowing the flaws already inherent in them just opens the door for more enrollments and then disenrollments as we have already experienced in our current roll.

I ask you, before voting on this constitutional amendment, contemplate these issues and concerns. Then ask yourself if this is the change that is needed. Don't be fooled into voting for change you can't believe in.

June Sherer
Roll #735

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