

## Letters

### Dear *Smoke Signals*:

As we prepare to vote on a constitutional amendment to change the enrollment criteria, I am compelled to tell the story of my family in hopes that our Tribal membership will see how the 1999 Enrollment Amendment played havoc on our family.

I am the great-great-granddaughter of Tillamook Bobb, Henry Ki Ki and Antoine Metzgar, and the great-granddaughter of Catherine Ki Ki, Joseph Thompson, Levi Bobb and Lucinda Metzgar (Wacheno). I am the granddaughter of Annie Thompson and Wilson Bobb Sr. "Chupe" (many of you may remember him as "Willie"). I am the daughter of 100 percent Grand Ronde Indian woman Edna Bobb. You can find these names on over 150 years of Grand Ronde census rolls. You can go to the Grand Ronde cemetery and find the headstones of just about each person listed herein.

All my Tribal ancestors are there, some just laid to rest in unmarked graves. My uncles Joseph Gale Bobb and Wilson Bobb Jr. are listed on the West Valley Veterans Memorial. The Veterans Memorial that was designed and built by my first cousin and Tribal Councilman Steve Bobb.

With all these irrefutable ties to the Grand Ronde Tribe, my grandchildren were amongst those who were disenrolled due to the 1999 Enrollment Amendment. How did this happen? It began in 1954 during Termination when my grandfather, Wilson Bobb Sr., fought against the Termination of the Grand Ronde Tribe. He felt that it was wrong and that the federal government was filling them with lies, just as they had done his parents when they placed them on this reservation. He felt that they were making promises that they would not fulfill.

When he lost his battle, he was angry and sent a letter asking to have his name and the names of his children removed from the Termination rolls. He did not want one dime of the money that the federal government was promising our people. The end result being our family is all listed on the "1954" (and every census roll prior) proposed Termination Roll and was stricken from the "1956" final Termination Roll. This is the reason that my grandchildren do not meet the current criteria for enrollment. This is the reason my 13-year-old grandson is enrolled and his 10- and 11-year-old brothers are not.

My heritage runs deep in my veins. My mother was a proud full-blooded Grand Ronde Indian woman and she instilled that pride in each of her children. As a member of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, I know what it is to be Indian, but not recognized as one.

We all know what Termination did to our people and 30 years later the struggle that was fought by our Elders to undo the Termination Act and give each of us respect and acknowledgement as Native people. I want this for my grandchildren. They are Grand Ronde and should be recognized as Grand Ronde Tribal members.

**Ann K. Lewis**  
Roll #3983

### Dear fellow Tribal members:

Please consider this letter a follow-up to what I wrote in the last issue of *Smoke Signals*. I am voting "yes" on the proposed constitutional amendment and I hope that you will join me. Here are my reasons:

1. **Equality:** All Tribal members are created equal. If your parent is a Grand Ronde Tribal member, and the blood quantum you derive from them is at least 1/16th, then you should be enrolled in this Tribe. That should apply to every member of this Tribe, not just people on the Restoration Roll. It should not matter whether your parent enrolled in 1984, 1985 or 1995.
2. **Controlling Growth:** I understand what Tribal Council was thinking in 1999. The Tribal population was growing at a rate that would be nearly impossible to govern and realistically provide core services to our membership. This newest amendment will honor their intent while cleaning up the inconsistencies and the unintended consequences of our current enrollment requirements.
3. **Minimizing the Impacts:** With the language for an enrollment cap, new members will be phased in over time allowing our Tribal government to plan accordingly.
4. **The Right Thing to Do:** Because I enrolled in the Tribe in 1983 and I have an ancestor on the Restoration Roll, none of my family will be affected by this amendment. I am part of that special class. The problem is, I don't agree with it. No Tribal family is better than another, but the 1999 amendment states otherwise. I do not believe this is how Tribes are meant to be. We are descendants of the Indians who were marched on the Trail of Tears to the Grand Ronde Indian Reservation in the 1850s and we all have the right to be part of this community so that we can build better lives for our children and grandchildren.
5. **Putting it to rest:** We can finally stop hearing about this issue in elections, at General Council meetings, on Facebook. We can finally quiet the debate on enrollment. If the amendment fails, we will have to keep hearing about it, especially during Tribal Council elections because every candidate claims to support it. If every candidate meant it, wouldn't we see evidence of the council's support?

We may not have achieved perfection in this amendment, but perfect is a hard standard to live up to. If you are still on the fence, please ask yourself, "What do I really have to lose?" Clearly, none of us is getting rich on per capita; it will never make any of us independently wealthy. Please vote "yes"!

**Angie Blackwell**  
Roll #1089

### Dear *Smoke Signals*:

I would like to thank Wink Soderberg for his recent letter discussing the old, current and new proposed enrollment requirements. I know this has been a hot button issue for many on both sides of the fence.

I have been an enrolled member since 1989 and have taken great pride in my heritage. Although I may not live as close to the Tribe as I would like to, I have still made it a point to come down and enjoy this wonderful culture of ours on numerous occasions.

But this letter is not about me or my three siblings or my father. This letter is about my nieces and nephews who share the same blood quantum as my daughter and two of my siblings' children, but they do not receive any of the benefits of this great Tribe because of a technicality. My oldest sister was registered after they were born. Not only is this not fair, but almost cruel. Four would-be Tribal members get to sit by and watch their cousins benefit from being a member of the Tribe and they themselves receive nothing.

My oldest nephew and I were only three years apart and grew up more like brother and sister. He would often talk about how upsetting it was that this Tribe that he and his siblings rightfully belonged in wouldn't recognize him as a member.

And although he was never a member, he would attend dang near every powwow and just soak it all in. He looked forward to it every year. He brought his children and even some of his friends. He was so proud. Proud of his heritage and a Tribe that wouldn't even let him in. He never let the rejection of the Tribe stop him from enjoying what his grandfather and great-grandfather and so on gave to him.

In case you haven't picked on the fact that I refer to my bright-eyed nephew in the past tense yet, I do so because as of Oct. 10 2010, at the age of 32 he left this world and all three of his children and his parents and all the rest of us without his bright smile and love for Native ways.

The last time we were together was the powwow of 2010. While we were sitting around at "camp" waiting for the break to be over, he told me this horrific story. He said one night he woke up from a dead sleep and couldn't breathe.

He tried everything, but he couldn't breathe in or out no matter how hard he tried. He said he didn't know how to describe it other than it felt like someone just stole his breath. Can you imagine? That must have been freaky.

After my nephew finished telling me this story I asked him, "Did you go to the doctor to get checked out?" I was shocked when he told me no! I started in on the lecturing as to why he should go and why didn't he go. That's when he looked at me and said, "I can't. I don't have health insurance and I cannot afford to pay out of pocket." I didn't know what to say. We all know how much health care is.

So I'm sure you can imagine I was sick to my stomach that not even two months after he told me this story I received a phone call saying that he had passed. Thirty-two years young. Father of three.

I am in no way blaming the Tribe, or its council, or its voters for my nephew's death.

There is no way to know if there would have been any different outcome if he did have health insurance and was able to go to the doctor, but I bet his kids would have loved the chance to find out.

Come to find out, he had a pre-existing heart condition (yes it runs in the family; his grandmother, my mother, passed away at 58 of a heart attack) that with proper diagnosis and treatment could have at least prolonged his life.

I bet he would have loved to see his children grow up.

My nephew, Brian Lee Creed Jr., left behind three siblings. It was too late for him, but it's not for them.

The past cannot be undone. We all know that. But please, for the sake of your Tribal brothers and sisters, weigh the options before you deny them what's rightfully theirs. The money would have been nice, but the health care could have been lifesaving!

**Leah Medina**  
Roll #2260

### Dear Tribal members:

The last issue of *Smoke Signals* had many letters regarding the upcoming vote on the enrollment amendment. Through these letters, it was easy to feel the pain of the denied and disenrolled Tribal families. My family is one of them.

My son is 7 years old and was denied enrollment due to the 1999 enrollment amendment, despite the fact that he has several cousins who have the exact same blood running through their veins as he does and are enrolled Tribal members. The pain this has caused our entire family is immeasurable. To explain this to him is impossible. What do I tell him?

One thing I noticed about the letter writers to the last issue of *Smoke Signals* is that many of them don't have a family member affected by the 1999 enrollment amendment. Yet they took the time to write because to correct the wrongs of that amendment is what is right. It is that simple.

When you vote "yes" on this enrollment amendment, you are being a Tribal member who says that yes, we include rightful Tribal members. And yes, we heal split families. And yes, we do the right thing when the choice is presented to us. Please vote "yes."

**Lee Ann Huffman**  
Roll #2933