

Letters

Dear *Smoke Signals*:

Regarding the proposed enrollment proposal, many members have not changed their minds from what they voted in 2008 on the relinquishment issue. That one issue being there again may mean there will be no justice for those who have a parent, grandparent, etc., on Grand Ronde rolls yet did not have a parent on the rolls the year they were born.

If this proposal does fail, I would ask Tribal Council to let the membership vote on each proposed change separately and let each issue pass or fail on its own merit. Let members have input with a comment period and give members voice through an advisory vote when you are proposing changes to our Tribal Constitution.

Through an advisory vote, you would know what the membership wants and will support. To keep throwing proposals out there when members were excluded from the process is a waste of time and resources.

Members care and try to work together for solutions to Tribal problems. If you will give us a voice before the proposal goes to the BIA for approval instead of Tribal Council trying to decide what we want and not hitting the mark — just ask us first by an advisory vote. It is a win-win way to do business.

Barbara Hughey

Roll #915

Dear fellow Tribal members:

I have been enjoying my life after Tribal Council. One of those things I enjoy especially is watching our members go back and forth on some of the hot-button issues, not just at General Council meetings, but on the World Wide Web and Facebook.

As usual, some people are making it a little too personal, and being very creative with "facts." This is definitely the case when people get to talking about the constitutional amendment we have coming.

It was very encouraging to see members come forward with their letters of support in the last issue of *Smoke Signals*, the Oct. 15th one. To me this issue is about having enrollment requirements that are consistent and, very importantly, fair for everybody who is an enrolled member of the Grand Ronde Tribe.

Since 1999, they haven't been either. You hear the talk about split families, but really our membership has been split into two classes of people: those who are allowed to pass on their Grand Ronde blood, like those with an ancestor on the Restoration Roll, and those who cannot, which is everybody else but specifically members who enrolled under the pre-1999 enrollment rules. Basically "haves" and "have nots." I'm glad they used Mike Wilson to demonstrate this point.

If I were a betting man, I'd bet there will be letters urging you to vote "no" on the amendment in this same issue of *Smoke Signals*. These letters won't focus on the real issue of this amendment, which is equality. Instead they will focus on how the amendments should be split up into four or five or six parts, which Tribal Council tried three years ago and mostly failed. Or they might write about the "flood of people" who will enroll, which is unlikely since the new amendment includes language to limit the number of people who can enroll every year, plus in 2008 enrollment staff estimated around 300 new people would join. They will claim our Tribe will go broke. Or they will try and dazzle readers with history, all the while ignoring the central issue of fairness. What would not surprise me in the least is if most of these letters come from individuals with an ancestor on Restoration Roll who belong to the "haves" class.

Keep in mind that if we really want to help solve the enrollment problems that have plagued our Tribe since 1999, you're going to have to loosen the restrictions somewhat. More people will be able to enroll. Whether you were voting on a bundle or separate amendments, that would not change. That is a fact. At least with this bundle we know that opening the rolls up will happen at the same time as a new policy to control enrollment. It's called a safeguard. Think trickle not flood.

I've yet to hear a convincing argument against this amendment that didn't involve confusing the issue or exaggeration. If people don't want this amendment to pass because they want their descendants to get a greater slice of pie, then just say so! But please don't resort to misinforming your fellow Tribal members on an issue that is really, really hurtful and divisive. We are better than that.

Regardless, I am voting "yes." It's the right thing to do.

Wink Soderberg

Roll #777

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Dear *Smoke Signals*:

To all the Tribal members who took the time and effort to register to vote in the upcoming Grand Ronde Constitutional Election, please take the next step and vote when your ballot arrives.

However, before voting, I would ask you to take the time to read and study the proposed amendment. It is not a "cure-all" as most of the letters in the Oct. 15, 2011, issue of *Smoke Signals* indicated.

In 2008, our Tribal membership voted by over a two-thirds majority to change the relinquishment time period from one year to five years. So why is a relinquishment time period from five years to two years included in the proposed amendment?

I had one Tribal member tell me that no one would give up their Tribal membership in another Tribe for two years so that at the end of the two years the person could apply to join our Tribe. The truth is giving up two years of no benefits in one Tribe for a Tribe that has helped its membership as much as ours has is a no-brainer. More people will try and do just that if the amendment is approved.

The removal of the requirement to have a parent on a Grand Ronde roll at the time of the applicant's birth and at the time of application is a good thing because we are a terminated Tribe. Since 1999, this requirement has caused the denial of many Tribal descendants who have ancestors on the Restoration Roll. This is the only part of the proposed amendment that makes sense to me.

The proposed definition of Grand Ronde blood moves it away from the Restoration Roll to any roll or record before or since Restoration that was prepared by the Department of the Interior or the Tribe. No one knows for sure what roll or records could be used. When our Elders worked for Restoration, it was for those on the Termination Roll, those who should have been on it and their descendants. I will go with the wisdom of our Elders at Restoration on this one as they were the ones that worked so hard for the people of the Grand Ronde Tribe.

The last proposed change is setting a limit on the number of persons accepted per year, no less than 2 percent of the membership and not more than 5 percent of the membership. It may keep membership growth down, but based on how the proposed definition of Grand Ronde blood is written, no one can estimate just how many new people will be trying to enroll in our Tribe.

In 1999, the membership was asked to vote on a bundled proposed amendment at the urging of the Tribal Council. It slowed enrollment, but resulted in unforeseen situations, one of them being the denial of those who Grand Ronde, in a sense, was restored for, meaning the descendants of our ancestors named on the Restoration Roll. To my way of thinking, this bundled amendment, if approved, could cause more unforeseen situations within our Tribe and for our Tribal people.

So I ask you, before you vote make sure you read and study the proposed amendment and know exactly what this amendment would do if approved by our Tribal voters.

Leroy R. Good

Roll #892

Dear Tribal members:

This is the first time I've ever written to *Smoke Signals*. I observe a lot of what goes on in our Tribe, but haven't had much reason to get involved ... until now.

As you know, we are all supposed to be voting on a constitutional amendment this month. Although this doesn't affect my family one way or the other, I am hoping that you will vote "yes."

I'm sure there will be unhappy people regardless of the outcome; enrollment seems to be one of those issues people feel very strongly about. Everyone has their reasons, but I think it is very sad that money appears to be the primary focus on many minds.

Although my family isn't affected, I can put myself in the shoes of somebody who is and imagine what it must feel like. I hope you will consider this scenario: My blood quantum is one-fourth, which means my kids are one-eighth and should be able to enroll.

However, my parents enrolled in 1985, and our blood isn't passed on because only blood listed on the Restoration Roll (before 1985) is considered Grand Ronde blood. My kids' blood quantum is zero; they aren't Indian. How does this make sense?

Here is another possible scenario: My mother is a Grand Ronde Tribal member. Her blood quantum is one-quarter. So mine should be one-eighth, right? Wrong.

She enrolled in the Tribe after I was born so I don't have a parent on the roll at the time of my birth so I have zero Grand Ronde blood. Crazy but true.

Our membership requirements have technicalities that have created these kinds of situations and I don't think they are fair.

The proposed amendment also has language to limit the number of people who can enroll every year, so arguments that the floodgates will open simply aren't true. If this amendment passes, population growth will be controlled and manageable.

Please consider voting yes on the upcoming constitutional election. It's fair and it's the right thing to do.

Teresa Henry

Roll #1225