

Letters

Dear fellow Tribal members:

As I'm sure many of you already know, the Tribe is currently conducting an election to amend the Tribal Constitution with regard to the enrollment requirements. Although I am pleased that Tribal Council has taken the initiative to try and resolve some of the enrollment issues, I must admit that I do have some concerns with Tribal Council's approach.

- **Bundled Amendments:** There are four amendments to the current enrollment requirements being proposed. Due to varying impacts of each proposed amendment and the right that each Tribal member has to his/her individual opinion, my belief is that the four amendments should be separated into four votes thus giving Tribal members the right to exercise their opinions on each of the amendments. Instead, the decision was made to allow only one vote for the four proposed amendments. As a concerned Tribal member, this decision has limited my right to voice my opinions in each of the four proposed amendments.
- **Change to the definition of Grand Ronde blood:** The proposed change would allow one to use "any roll or record of Grand Ronde members prepared by the Department of Interior or the Tribe prior to or since the effective date of the Tribal Constitution" to prove their Tribal lineage. My concern is not necessarily the proposed change of the definition but rather the accuracy of the "rolls or records" that one would be allowed to use. With the emotions, heartache and turmoil that come with disenrollment, I don't understand why we would put ourselves in a position to later disenroll members who potentially proved their Tribal lineage from inaccurate "rolls or records." Tribal Council has already voted to move forward with an audit of the membership rolls. To proceed with anything prior to the audit, in my opinion, is putting the cart before the horse.
- **Fairness:** I've read and heard from various Tribal members that to be fair, Tribal members should vote "yes" on the proposed amendments. I have to disagree, at least with regard to one of the proposed amendments. As part of the bundled amendments, there is one clause that would limit the number of persons accepted as members of the Tribe each year. The limit would be no less than 2 percent and no more than 5 percent of enrolled members. My question is how "fair" is it to make somebody who meets all enrollment requirements wait (potentially years) to become enrolled? In my opinion, anyone who meets the enrollment requirements should be able to enroll with no limitations on the length of time they have to wait. I do understand the intent of this clause and I feel it would be beneficial for planning purposes, but let's be honest, it is not fair.
- **Long-term Impacts:** While I feel I am well-versed in this upcoming election, I have yet to hear about the long-term impacts. I know, if passed, there will be individuals immediately eligible for enrollment. I know that Tribal Council will have to make immediate amendments to the Enrollment Ordinance. I also know that budgets (maybe as soon as the 2012 budget) will be impacted by these changes. What I don't know is how the Tribe will be impacted 10, 20 or 30 years down the road. Or even more importantly, seven generations down the road. I don't remember our Tribal leadership telling us in 1999 that, if the amendments pass, it will create "split families." However, we did know about the immediate impacts of our decision in 1999. If the long-term impacts had been a focus, I believe the outcome may have been different.

In closing, I will say that there is no doubt in my mind that as a result of the constitutional amendments of 1999, enrollment issues need to be addressed. It seems that the current members of Tribal Council are committed to enrollment and are working hard to find ways to help those who rightfully belong on the Tribal membership rolls. Although I am thankful that Tribal Council recognizes the need to work on enrollment, I am disappointed in their most recent approach.

Thank you for your time,
Toby McClary
 Roll #1471

Dear Smoke Signals:

I will be voting "no" on the Constitutional Amendment Election. My main reason for voting "no" is because our Tribal leaders have chosen to put all of the proposed changes to our Constitution into one amendment, one vote.

In 2008, Tribal voters were able to express their opinion by being able to vote on each proposed change separately.

Some of our Tribal leaders feel the 2008 election was a failure because all proposed changes did not pass. However, the election was a success because Tribal voters had an opportunity to vote on each proposed change as they saw fit.

I will not be persuaded to vote for the bundled amendment when I only agree with one of the proposed changes and that proposed change is to remove the requirement to have a parent on a Tribal roll at the time of the applicant's birth and at the time a person applies.

Andrea Knight
 Roll #1284

Dear Tribal members:

I imagine you'll see a number of negative letters in this issue of *Smoke Signals* regarding the upcoming constitutional amendment asking you to vote "no." Those letters will make ominous statements about "problems"

and "negative impacts" of the amendment without providing any details or facts about those things.

I ask you to demand proof from people attacking this constitutional amendment before you accept such statements as truth. I'm supporting the amendment because after much reflection and analysis I'm convinced it provides a fair and equitable path to Tribal citizenship for all Tribal members and their descendants.

Here are some further facts about the amendment:

- There are no "floodgates." The use of this term is a scare tactic. The fact is that there have only been a few hundred applicants denied since 1999 who would be eligible to enroll. Furthermore, the enrollment cap ensures that only 2 percent to 5 percent can enroll in any given year.
- There is little financial impact on Member Services and/or per capita. While the analysis provided in the recent *Tilixam Wawa* showed a small impact, the analysis forgot to include the additional funding we'll receive from federal programs for the increase in Tribal population. Nor did it take into consideration that many of the people who will be able to enroll are children. Children don't have an impact on housing, Elders pension or most Member Services programs.
- The definition of Grand Ronde blood is nearly identical to the definition the Tribe used from 1984-99. After our Restoration, many Tribal members, including myself, enrolled under a definition that included "all Indian blood" from "any roll or record" of Grand Ronde membership. That changed in 1999. Shouldn't we have the same definition for all Tribal members?

Thank you for reading my perspective on the constitutional amendment. And thank you for asking for those who attack this amendment to prove it.

Bryan Mercier
 Roll #1357

Dear Tribal membership:

I have heard a lot of comments on the upcoming election regarding the enrollment amendment, so I thought it was time to voice my opinion on the proposed amendment.

In reading the letters lately in *Smoke Signals*, I have to question, are people voting to address their own individual needs or are they really looking at what is best for the whole Tribe? It should and I hope people are voting with the entire membership in mind.

Regardless of what side of the vote you are on, everyone should vote "no" in the upcoming election simply because of the unresolved issues that this amendment doesn't address and the lack of education to the membership. During the educational meetings, members have asked several questions that nobody has the answers for.

This only shows what I already knew and that is that this amendment was put together with very little thought as to how it would actually be implemented. People always need to remember the saying "be careful what you wish for." Don't make your situation worse by an uneducated vote.

Here are some of the unresolved questions and issues that I have concerning the proposed amendment:

1. How can we vote to have a cap on enrollment, but no one knows what that cap will be from year to year? That will make planning and budgeting impossible for both staff and Council.
2. I believe the proposed definition of "Grand Ronde blood" was chosen out of about three or four different definitions because it was meant just to help certain people and families. Again we should be looking at the impact on the entire membership, not just a select few.
3. I believe the proposed relinquishment language is not really about relinquishment at all, but was added to the "package" because it was necessary to get at least five votes on Council to approve the proposed amendment and get something out the door. It is insulting to ask the membership to vote on an issue they overwhelmingly spoke on last time.
4. The proposed language for "parent on the roll" is by far the most widely supported portion of this package, and therefore will suffer the most when this amendment fails as I believe it will. It is my belief that all nine Council members agree with the amendment as it pertains to "parent on the roll."

Therefore, I ask the question as to why could it not have stood alone and had a real chance to pass?

I ask for your "no" vote on the upcoming proposed amendment. Enrollment issues should be about Grand Ronde People being enrolled as Grand Ronde Tribal members, not about political or personal agendas.

Reyn Leno
 Roll #453

Need scholarship help?

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