

Letters

Dear *Smoke Signals*:

For the first time in a while I attended a General Council meeting. If you weren't there on May 1, I highly recommend watching it on the Tribal website.

Eric Bernando of the Chief Tumulth descendants read off the last wishes of former Tribal Elder and member Chuck Williams. For those of you not familiar with this remarkable man, he was a gifted photographer, having produced a book called "Bridge of the Gods, Mountains of Fire." He also testified for the Tribe during the Gorge casino political battle years ago, proudly allowing Grand Ronde to use his family to demonstrate our link to the Columbia River Gorge.

Chuck passed away in late April, and Mr. Bernando read off an incomplete letter Chuck wrote requesting the Tribal Council figure out a way to keep his family within the Tribe. You see, Chuck Williams was among those provisionally disenrolled from Grand Ronde two years ago. Despite our use of his family to influence a public policy decision, thwarting the Warm Springs casino, we ended up dismissing them from the Tribe once they were no longer of use. At least it sure seems that way. That is what made the presentation so powerful. It was, and still is, tragic.

Please watch the video if you can. I would not wish disenrollment on anyone, least of all a family who stepped forward to help us.

Much was said during the General Council meeting about this constitutional election on enrollment. Having sat through the April 20 meeting, and watched the April 6 meeting, I've been appalled at what I've heard and seen. I saw a Tribal Council member get screamed at when trying to respond to a question. I saw five council members called "sh—" and "poopoo" for supporting the proposal. Being completely honest, those who oppose this are being a lot less civil than those who support it.

I am on the Restoration Roll, but that doesn't make me any better than somebody who isn't. My descendants are not somehow more deserving simply because I was on the roll in 1983. But it seems many of my fellow Restoration Roll folks feel differently. Times have definitely changed. The Grand Ronde I grew up in during the 1970s and '80s was very inviting. We wanted people to come back, to join our Tribe. Now, we are either kicking people out or doing everything in our power to make sure they don't get in.

I don't know where this snobby attitude of "real Grand Ronders" came from. Born and raised here, and on the Restoration Roll, I am as "real" and "local" as it gets. But I also know that following Termination, people left and set up lives elsewhere. They went where there were jobs and means of supporting their families, many leaving the state. There is nothing wrong with that, for many it was the best choice. I don't look down my nose at these people or their descendants. Which is why I am OK with this proposal.

We were given a Tribal government and casino to improve the lives of those descended from the many Tribes and Bands that were forced onto the Grand Ronde Indian Reservation back in the 1800s. Let us do just that.

Angie Blackwell

Roll #1089

Dear *Smoke Signals*:

A letter from Rex Haller ran in the May 1 issue, offering his perspective, mentioning me by name. Before addressing points in his letter, I offer the following overview of our Tribal enrollment requirements. These are requirements to be a Grand Ronde Tribal member, per our Constitution, taken from documents used by enrollment staff and the presentations approved by Tribal Council for the upcoming educational meetings. Not "legalese," but plain English.

In order to enroll in Grand Ronde, you must meet most of these requirements:

- 1. Five-Year Relinquishment Period:** You cannot be enrolled in another Tribe. If you have relinquished membership from another Tribe, five years must have passed.
- 2. Parent on the Roll at the time of your birth:** One of your parents must be a Grand Ronde Tribal member the day you are born.
- 3. Parent on the Roll at the time of application:** One of your parents must be a Grand Ronde Tribal member when you apply for enrollment, unless that parent is deceased. If living, the Tribal parent must still be enrolled as a Grand Ronde Tribal member.
- 4. 1/16 blood quantum:** You must possess 1/16th Grand Ronde blood, which comes from ...
- 5. Ancestor on the Restoration Roll:** Your Grand Ronde blood must come from an ancestor whose name was validly listed on the Tribe's Restoration Roll, aka the roll when the Tribe was restored in 1983. However, that blood, per our Constitution, is defined as "All Indian blood" from that ancestor. So yes, "Grand Ronde blood" may include blood from other Tribes if it comes from somebody listed on that roll. Grand Ronde blood is not always Kalapuya, Rogue River, Chasta, Umpqua or Molalla.

Not everybody must meet these five requirements. If you never enrolled in another Tribe, No. 1 is irrelevant to you. If your Tribal parent no longer lives, No. 3 does not apply to you. All other requirements you must meet. These requirements are very different from what the Tribe used up until 1999, the year major changes took place, causing major problems for some Tribal families.

Many people meet requirement No. 3, as their Tribal parents are alive and enrolled in Grand Ronde. But they don't meet requirement No. 2, per-

haps being born between 1954 (Termination) and 1983 when the Tribe was restored. As no Tribe existed in the eyes of the federal government, there was no Tribal roll to be added to. Or their parents were enrolled in another Tribe. Or they just didn't apply before 1999. Many also cannot pass on their blood, since it does not come from the Restoration Roll, e.g. Tribal member with one-quarter blood quantum should have kids with one-eighth, right? After 1999, the kids get zero.

Last summer, an amendment to the above requirements was proposed (Proposal No. 1), one that would remove requirements Nos. 2 and 3. Had that proposal moved forward, those two requirements would have been on a ballot listed as one change. You could not vote on them separately.

When items that can be separated are combined into one vote that is called a "bundle." Some people claim the proposal last summer, which was voted down at a Special Tribal Council meeting on Oct. 22, 2015, was not a bundle. They think No. 2 and No. 3 are the same thing, even though some people who want to be enrolled meet requirement No. 3 but not No. 2. They could vouch there are two different requirements. That last summer's proposal was a "bundle" is factually indisputable. Some dispute it, and I find that silly.

Some Tribal Council who supported Proposal No. 1 stated at the July 28 Legislative Action Committee meeting and the July 29 Tribal Council meeting that they did not care about the impacts of the proposal in terms of how many new Tribal members would be able to be enrolled. If you don't believe me, watch the videos. Oct. 22, we were poised to move forward, and still did not have updated statistics, so they meant it.

The newest proposal was moved forward April 6, and includes the bundle from Proposal No. 1, Parent on the Roll at time of birth and Parent on the Roll at time of application, plus changing requirement No. 5 to include people who enrolled in the Tribe from 1984 to 1999. Proposal No. 2, the present one, is also a bundle. Supporters don't deny that. On April 6, the numbers provided by our Enrollment Department in terms of new enrollees were:

- 196 new Tribal members if No. 2 is eliminated.
- 30 new if requirement No. 5 is changed as proposed.
- 130 people need No. 2 and No. 5 to change.
- People affected only by No. 3 are incredibly rare, so little data exists.

The numbers above are based on rejected applications for enrollment from 1999 to April 2016, assuming all are alive and would apply. They do not account for potential descendants. That is the unknown. So, the numbers could be higher.

Rex Haller's May 1 letter gives the impression we proceed blindly. His statements aren't entirely true, nor are they false. He was present April 6. Maybe he left early, or just didn't hear those numbers mentioned. Having an exact number is impossible.

Inexact numbers and bundles are causes for concern. That I don't deny. But last summer none of these concerns were raised. I asked Rex why he didn't object to Proposal No. 1 (a bundle) months ago or Tribal Council members dismissing the need for updated data. This exchange is omitted from his letter, but he obviously did not like my question.

I don't think people opposing these amendments are focused on the "whats" of the amendments. They are focusing on the "who." If not, last summer's bundled and blind approach should have sparked outrage. Which is why I think the focus is on people, and not the issues themselves.

Sadly, that is quite normal in Grand Ronde politics.

Sincerely,

Chris Mercier

Tribal Council

Roll #1821

Peace and Dignity Journey stopping in Grand Ronde

The quadrennial Peace and Dignity Journey will be stopping in Grand Ronde on Friday, June 17, for an overnight stay.

The journey has been run every four years since 1992. This year, one group started May 1 in Alaska and another group started in Tierra del Fuego, Argentina, and they will meet up after seven months of running in Panama.

The 2016 run is dedicated to the seeds and traditional foods that are threatened by industrial agriculture. Participants are handing out seeds for a Three Sisters Garden -- corn, beans and squash -- for a \$5 donation.

Peace and Dignity Journeys were inspired by an ancient prophecy of the Eagle and the Condor coming together, symbolizing the unification of indigenous people in the Western Hemisphere.

The local contact for the runners' visit is Kathy Provost, 503-857-8440. For more information, visit PeaceandDignity.org on the Internet or contact Mel Huey, 11448 Feters Loop, Eugene, Ore. 97402, call 541-915-0788 or send an e-mail to mel97402@gmail.com. ■

