

## Letters

### Dear *Smoke Signals*:

As most of you are aware, we soon will be voting on amendments to make changes to our Constitution.

First, I would like to remind everyone that if you have not completed and returned your BIA voter registration, be sure to do so by the June 7 deadline. If you do not return your BIA voter registration in time, then you will not receive a ballot for the BIA election.

Secondly, I would like to share some thoughts regarding the proposed constitutional amendment on enrollment requirements. As most of us know, the reason we even have to deal with this vote is an attempt to correct issues that resulted from the “bundled” 1999 amendment. As we discovered, bundling does not work. We should have been allowed to vote on each item individually on its own merit. I believe that if all of our people had been better informed in 1999, they would have joined me when I had voted against the “bundled” 1999 amendment.

To avoid duplicating the mistakes of the past, it is now more important than ever that we educate ourselves on all aspects of the proposed amendment changes. Earlier this year, when I heard the rumors of the proposed change to the definition of Grand Ronde blood, just as in 1999, I began researching the possible effects. I discovered some of the same facts that were presented during the BIA education meetings held May 17-19. This proposed change to the definition of Grand Ronde blood will in essence create a separate roll/class of those enrolled before 1999 from those enrolled after. This change will create splits in families that do not currently exist (for further clarification and examples, please review slides 21-31 of the presentation).

It has been said by those who proposed this change to the definition of Grand Ronde blood that it will not be able to pass without being bundled with the removal of the parent on the roll requirements. They also still cannot explain all of the ramifications of this proposed change. Does this sound like a well thought-out proposal to you?

If the real reason behind the proposed change to the definition of Grand Ronde blood is to assist those who do not meet an ancestor on the Restoration Roll requirement, then there is already a process in place for that. If that is not the real reason for the proposal, then what is the reason and why the push for a bundle?

I encourage all of my fellow Tribal members to educate themselves on all aspects of this upcoming BIA election. Help me send a message to Tribal Council that we deserve the right to vote on each item individually and that we do not want the definition of Grand Ronde blood changed by voting “no.”

**Deborah M. Good**

Roll #1227

### Dear *Smoke Signals*:

Before I get started, I want to state clearly that I have wanted to see the parent on the roll section of the 1999 enrollment amendment removed for some time now. It saddens my heart to know that there are split families with one child enrolled and one not enrolled simply because of the year they were born, even though both children are at least 1/16th Grand Ronde blood.

I was overjoyed when Toby McClary spearheaded the motion to remove this section from the enrollment qualifications (Proposal No. 1), and his efforts at that time were supported by the majority of Tribal Council.

Suddenly, when Toby retired from Tribal Council and a new person was voted in, the new amendment that was set to move forward was brought to another vote with our current Tribal Council. The new majority opted to stop the amendment from going into effect, with the excuse given that there were other enrollment issues and it was unfair to fix just one of the issues.

Since this excuse made zero sense to me (Why not fix one problem and focus on the others?), I began to listen closely to the opponents of Proposal No. 1 and the answer became clear to me. The new majority on Tribal Council would be unwilling to fix any enrollment issues unless all of their enrollment-based agendas were supported as well.

In the May 15 issue of *Smoke Signals*, I couldn't help but notice that a certain person from Tribal Council submitted a letter making reference to the parent on the roll issue. He stated that Proposal No. 1 was unfair because it changed both No. 2 and No. 3 of our enrollment requirements, which was a form of bundling in his eyes. Later in the same letter, he went on to say that No. 3 is an incredibly rare issue and there is little data to determine how many will be affected by removing the requirement. These contradictive statements only prove further that there was no valid reason to not fix the enrollment issue.

In the same letter, this person from Tribal Council quoted numbers of projected enrollees if three of the five enrollment requirements were to be removed. He stated that these numbers are based on rejected applicants. Since, in my opinion, most people will only apply for membership in a Tribe that they are qualified for, isn't there a much higher number of people who haven't applied and are willing to do so if the requirements are changed? I believe that a better estimation can be determined by looking at the enrollment numbers prior to the 1999 enrollment amendment.

In 1995, the year the casino was opened, there were 118 members enrolled. In comparison:

- In 1996, 252 were enrolled.
- In 1997, 304 were enrolled.

- In 1998, 349 were enrolled.

- In 1999, 403 were enrolled.

I believe that if the proposed changes to enrollment that we are voting on this year were to pass, it will be a very safe estimate that at least as many people will be enrolled in 2017 as there were in 1999, if not more because many have waited for up to 17 years for an opportunity.

I predict in 2017, if the enrollment amendment is voted in, there will be anywhere from 600 to 1,000 new people enrolled in the Tribe. In five years, if we continue the trend from 1996 to 1999, there will be a 50 percent increase in our Tribal membership, with more than 2,500 new people being enrolled. I also believe that my numbers are based on more sound data than the usage of rejected applicants.

It is clear to me that those on Tribal Council who support the newly proposed enrollment amendment do not know the impact that it will have on our Tribal membership and our programs and endowments. I will be voting “no” on both of the proposed amendments, and I hope that many others will join me.

Now is not the time to make drastic changes to our Constitution and to jeopardize our Tribe's identity and overall financial well-being. Let us hope that in the near future we will have a majority on Tribal Council who care more about the well-being of the Tribe than their own political agendas.

**Judith Myer**

Roll #839

### Dear *Smoke Signals*:

I am hoping that by the time most of you have read this letter, you will have registered to vote in the constitutional election on both our enrollment requirements and the initiative and referendum petitioning requirements. These are very important elections, and if successful will have long-lasting effects on our Tribe.

This is a quicker election than normal, but we on Tribal Council were faced with a decision in early May to either conduct the constitutional election now or wait until after Tribal Council elections and quite possibly conduct a completely different election, if at all. I wanted to see this through.

The 1999 enrollment requirements election was one that had adverse impacts on some families, and little impact on others. Having an ancestor on the Restoration Roll, I am one of the lucky ones. But like Angie Blackwell wrote last issue, I don't think my children are more deserving or better. I happen to be one of those families who did relocate, but maintained our ties to the Tribe and, more importantly, kept our names on the rolls.

Many families didn't do this. After Termination in 1954, nobody really knew the Tribe would get restored, and would build and operate Oregon's biggest casino. Between Restoration and 1999, many families did return. To penalize them for not getting their names on the Restoration Roll, or for their parents having children before enrolling in the Tribe, or for being born between 1954 and 1983, none of these seem right.

Adoption, disconnection from the Tribal community, such situations are simple twists of fate that since 1999 have been grounds to bar people entry into this Tribe despite clear ancestral connections and very often even the right blood. This enrollment amendment will help fix many of these unfortunate circumstances.

At the same time many Tribal leaders have always spoken of given the members a greater voice, of listening to the people and taking their concerns to heart. Right now Tribal Council runs just about everything. Council members say they want to be here for the membership, to listen. But aside from the occasional advisory vote or surveys, we rarely ever give our members a say in anything. Members vote for Tribal Council and pray they will do what they said while campaigning. Our Tribal Constitution includes rights for Tribal members, but two of the major ones, initiative (the ability to propose laws and/or resolutions and put to a vote of the people) and referendum (the ability to revoke resolutions of council or laws and put to a vote) are made impossible by petitioning requirements that are totally unrealistic. This amendment gives you, the Tribal membership, a tool through which your voice is heard and cannot be denied by Tribal Council. I honestly cannot think of a good argument against this amendment.

I am a Tribal Council member and, yes, this amendment gives you a means to undo one of my decisions. I am OK with that. I don't want unchecked power, and I don't want future Tribal Council members to have it either.

Please make sure you vote in this all-important election. These are major decisions being left up to you. As it should be.

**Denise Harvey**

Tribal Council

Roll #1874