

Letters

Dear Smoke Signals:

We have in my time on Tribal Council had multiple organizational charts. Generally these charts consist of a hierarchy. General Manager, Finance Officer, Chief of Staff and, of course, Tribal Council are usually listed atop these charts. Above that group is the General Membership, also known as the General Council, i.e. Tribal members. You.

I've long wondered whether that hierarchy is really accurate. Sure, you have the right to vote in Tribal Council elections and the rare but hopefully soon-to-be less rare advisory votes. And surveys, you get to do surveys. But beyond that, Tribal members have less say in our governance, in major policy decisions, than they should. You elect us, and we should represent you and your interests. "Should" being the operative word. I was reminded of that in February at the Portland General Council meeting when the issue of Native mascots dominated discussion.

Constitutional elections have been rare in Grand Ronde, perhaps occurring once every five years. But this one is different. Read our Tribal Constitution, and see that Tribal members have a section devoted entirely to them: Article II- General Council. Read Section 1. Powers. Under (b) is the power of initiative for General Council members, the ability to introduce ordinances (laws) and resolutions and put them to a vote of the people. Under (c) is the power of referendum, the ability to reconsider, to second-guess, any Tribal Council-mandated ordinance or resolution and also put to a vote of the people.

These are two of the most important powers Tribal members have. As is, they cannot be invoked because the petitioning requirements in place, the number of signatures needed to exercise these powers, are unrealistic and in my opinion impossible to meet. This amendment changes that.

If more than 500 Tribal members want an issue put to a vote, shouldn't that be Tribal law? If more than 500 Tribal members dislike a Tribal Council decision embodied in a resolution, or feel a law is unjust or ridiculous, shouldn't they have the power to put that to a vote? Personally, I believe so. In fact, I am quite adamant about it. If any decision I make riles up Tribal members to where more than 500 of them will petition, and then 66 percent agree the decision should be overturned, there should be no problem with that. That is how democracy should be.

Regarding our enrollment requirements, I think we finally have a solution to the harm inflicted upon our Tribal families by the 1999 amendment. This proposal does not open the floodgates, as many think. Yes, there will be many new members able to enroll. These new enrollees have family ties to Grand Ronde. They are not vagabonds wanting to join for the benefits. This is a far less liberal proposal in years past that addresses the negative impacts of the 1999 amendment, but also keeps intact the intent of Tribal leadership at that time, which was to keep Tribal population growth at a manageable level.

I have a niece and nephew, both of whom are half-Navajo, a Tribe that gets mentioned in the examples we've used during our educational sessions. Both were born after 1999, so their descendants will not get to use that Navajo blood. Should this amendment pass, they might harbor resentment to me one day. But at this time my goal was to help families impacted by the 1999 amendment. I would not propose amending the Constitution just to help my own family.

Above all, vote. One of these amendments could give you the right to more votes in the future. Another could help end the unfair situation into which some Tribal members have been thrust since 1999.

Vote your conscience. That is all I ask. I am voting "yes" on both.

Christopher G. Mercier

Tribal Council
Roll #1821

Dear Smoke Signals:

I'm sure by now most of you have heard of the proposed constitutional amendments on General Council powers and enrollment requirements. Being proposed are: 1) The reduction of General Council participation required for exercising the power of initiative or referendum; 2) The reduction in General Council participation for the calling of special General Council meetings; 3) The elimination of the requirement that an applicant be born to a parent who was a member of the Tribe at the time of the applicant's birth; 4) The elimination of the requirement that the applicant be born to a parent who was a member of the Tribe at the time of application; and, 5) An amendment of the definition of Grand Ronde blood, which would include all Indian blood (regardless if it is from a non-federally recognized Tribe) derived from a direct ancestor whose name validly appears on (1) The official Tribal membership roll prepared under the Grand Ronde Restoration Act, or (2) the official Tribal membership roll prepared by the Tribe between Nov. 30, 1984, and Sept. 14, 1999.

Setting aside the distinctly different issues being voted on, I would like to point out that this is being presented as a bundle, an all-or-nothing vote of "yes" or "no." Why would you be forced to vote on all issues at once instead of breaking them up into several votes on the same ballot?

Bundle choice voting is a way of getting issues passed that may not have enough support to be passed on their own. It is a compromise in an attempt to pass something through that you don't fully favor because the issue you do want passed is also included in the bundle. This amendment includes wholly separate, dissimilar issues that some may fully support, others may partially support, while still others may disagree with altogether. However, since they are bundled, we cannot vote on each and pass what we believe needs to pass without tacitly supporting all of the amendments presented. This is undemocratic, implicitly unfair and unconscionable.

I have strong opinions on all of the issues on this combined constitutional

amendment, but I refuse to be bullied into voting on all the issues without an opportunity to vote on each one individually, especially as I agree with some and not with others. Since none of us are being given that opportunity, I urge you to vote "no" until Tribal Council separates these issues and we can move forward to protect and promote all Grand Ronde Tribal members. These issues are too important for the future of our Tribe, and there should be no compromise.

Charles G. Haller II

Roll #1032

Dear Smoke Signals:

Grand Ronde blood is defined in our Constitution as "all Indian blood derived from a direct ancestor whose name validly appears on the official Tribal membership roll prepared under the Grand Ronde Restoration Act."

The CTGR Tribal members listed on the Restoration Roll are CTGR Indian blood and this definition should continue to be used by their descendants for enrollment purposes.

The many bands and Tribes of Indian people who became the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde have lived on these lands since time immemorial. The Tribe itself has not been in existence since time immemorial. It was created as a result of the United States genocide policies throughout colonization. This makes the birth of our Nation complex and unique. There must be a place and time in history that we (today's enrolled members) identify as the foundation of Tribal members in which we build.

As CTGR Tribal members we decide who we are, thereby we decide who we will become.

In the early years as the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde was being created, there were many Indian people who came to the Grand Ronde Reserve. There were many who were only here temporarily. There were many that never came. There were many that became CTGR Tribal members. There were many CTGR Tribal members who left the Reservation. There were many CTGR Tribal members who relinquished their membership.

CTGR blood is those Indian people who suffered genocide and relocation in the 1800s, became and remained enrolled CTGR Tribal members, suffering atrocities and assimilation during that reservation era, and then suffered the Termination of the CTGR Tribe in 1954. The official record of these Tribal members is the Termination roll.

Tribal Council met one time to discuss this amendment. The proposed language is a result of that one meeting. We discussed the parent on the roll issues. We discussed the split sibling families. We discussed new Indian blood. We did not discuss the definition of Grand Ronde blood. It is my opinion that one meeting was not adequate to bring forward a change to our Constitution. The proposed language is unfinished work.

Regardless of my individual opinion on these proposed changes, my expectation is to present the membership with the best language and to present it in a way that will result in an accurate vote of the will of the membership. The lack of effort put into this language, bundling issues and the short election timelines make the final vote askew.

My vote will be "no" to the proposed constitutional amendments! I believe the current definition in our Constitution of CTGR blood is the correct legal language for enrollment purposes and should not be changed. The definition of CTGR blood is the identity of this Tribe and should not be a moving target.

Tonya Gleason-Shepek

Tribal Council
Roll #1282

Accepting Applications for TERO Commission

CLOSES: July 1, 2016

The Tribal Employment Rights Commission is a regulatory body charged with enforcement of the Tribal Employment Rights Ordinance. Three (3) to five (5) Commissioners will be appointed by the Tribal Council to serve a three (3) year term.

The Commission will work with the TERO Director and take all appropriate actions to implement and enforce the TERO Ordinance and make recommendations to the Tribal Council on amendments to the Ordinance. Commissioners will be required to attend regularly scheduled monthly meetings and will be paid a stipend.

Other Responsibilities:

- Issue notices to appear and order relief or sanctions that are necessary and appropriate to enforce the TERO Ordinance.
- Certify firms as Indian Owned Businesses or Grand Ronde Owned Businesses.
- Hold public hearings on matters covered in the TERO Ordinance.
- Consult with the Tribal Attorney's Office as necessary on legal matters.
- Review program procedures, forms and policies necessary to carry out the purposes of the Ordinance.

Qualifications

Must possess a high school diploma or GED certificate; requires education or experience in one or more of the following areas: human resources, tribal employment rights, construction management, regulatory enforcement, auditing or investigations.

Ability to participate in TERO Commission regular or special sessions; experience with due process and regulatory hearing processes; must be able to read and interpret Tribal ordinances rules and regulations.; must be capable of conducting productive, collaborative, and orderly public meetings.

Individuals employed by Spirit Mountain Casino or the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde are not eligible for appointment.

For a complete job description, please visit the Tribe's website at www.grandronde.org/employment. Applications are available by contacting Grand Ronde Human Resources, 9615 Grand Ronde Road, Grand Ronde, OR 97347. For more information please contact Human Resources at 503879-2357.