

## Letters

### Dear *Smoke Signals*:

We have Indian fighting Indian again. Why? To keep some of our own Indians out. Shame on us.

All I am hearing on the “no” side is “What is going to happen to the money I am receiving?” Instead of “How can we help our own get recognized and heal our split families?”

I thought the former way as well 17 years ago. We have learned a lot from our one-time oppressors, including dirty politics, selfishness and greed. Some have learned much better than others.

I want to thank Ann Lewis for her letter in the June 1 *Smoke Signals* pointing out the facts amongst a fog of misinformation and fear. You see, back in 1999 I made the huge mistake in listening to the fear mongers. I voted for the 1999 amendment, not knowing at the time that I was voting against my own children.

My grandmother was Edna Bobb, a longtime Indian rights activist and buried at the Grand Ronde Cemetery. My children have plenty of Indian blood running through their veins. The spilled blood of their ancestors was just as red and Indian as anyone else’s. However, due to my naiveté, ignorance, perhaps greed and my 1999 vote, my daughter was disenrolled and my two sons have never been recognized.

When have we ever refused our own? When? Why? I would argue, quite vehemently, refusing our own is the antithesis of being Indian. So I urge all to please put yourselves in the shoes of our split families and help me to right a wrong and vote “yes.” Please learn from my mistake and don’t ban our own children for the possibility of a few more bucks.

Besides, when did being Indian become about money? I ask for honorable Elders to exercise wisdom, compassion and fairness to help teach our membership that being Indian is priceless and far more meaningful and far more valuable than money. Please vote “yes” for all of our Indian rights.

The ones at the top, holding power never want things to change. Why would they? Who are the ones that caused the split families? Do they actually have the nerve to try and persuade the membership to keep them split? Why? Shame. Shame. Please do not being fooled, confused or conflicted, this is not about money or programs. This is about what’s right.

We are fair and reasonable people so please don’t let any scare tactics persuade you into focusing on what very little you might lose, rather rejoice in what we have to gain. This amendment is a step forward in uniting and making our Tribe whole. Let us not forget it’s united we stand and remember there are no per capitas, endowment programs without the membership.

There was a time when we needed members. I propose that time will never end and with each new member comes new hope for our people. Please vote “yes” and thank you.

**Joseph Raya**  
Roll #2188

### Dear *Smoke Signals*:

This is my last opportunity to reach many of you on this historic choice. Not since my college days have I had to dwell on a subject for so long. After contemplating for another month, I felt the urge to again ask you to vote “yes” on the upcoming constitutional election. Both of them.

We still are criticized, I see, for not moving forward with the parent on the roll at time of birth and parent on the roll at time of application bundle last year. I, myself, was at one time a staunch opponent of bundling. But whether we moved forward with last year’s version or this year’s, all of Tribal Council supported, and members would be getting a bundle. In the end, we had to choose between a bundle that deliberately ignored certain families impacted by the 1999 amendment or one that helped nearly all of them.

There were no genuine attempts to compromise until it was too late. Compromise in general is a rare thing in Grand Ronde, I am learning after nine months on Tribal Council. Has it always been this divided? I don’t know. What I do know is we have a lot of people in this Tribe who don’t like each other, and they base their votes on that. This constitutional election has made that obvious.

But now for my reasons you should vote “yes”:

Enrollment: The 1999 amendment needs to be history.

A “yes” vote is the right thing to do. The 1999 bundled amendment had multiple facets, and this proposal does the best possible to resolve the chaos without disregarding the intent of the leadership at that time. I’ve learned that some people have applied to be put on the Restoration Roll, but were denied. They are descended from Grand Ronde people. Their connection and blood is undeniable. But legal technicalities stand in their way. This constitutional amendment is the only remedy for them. They belong. Being a Grand Ronde Tribal member is a gift of good fortune. We should share that, not hoard it.

Initiative, Referendum & Calling of Special General Council meetings: Power to the People.

After much more thought, I still cannot think of any reason to vote “no” on the Initiative, Referendum and Calling of Special General Council meetings. None. Zero. Zip. Why would we not want our Tribal members to have more power? Do we trust our members so little we don’t want them to be able to reverse a Tribal Council decision?

The petitioning numbers are not easy to achieve, but they would no longer be impossible, which is what they presently are. The power of advisory votes is good, but not enough to represent the will of the people, especially

when having to rely upon Tribal Council to even bring them forward.

The language in our Constitution for Initiative and Referendum was put there so the General Council could be organized and make their voices heard. These powers have not been exercised nearly enough, and to me if members are driven enough to gather the 550 or so signatures to advance an issue to a vote, then they deserve to have their voices heard. Yes, this could mean one of my own decisions in the future gets overturned. But if two-thirds voting disagree, no Tribal Council decision should stand. The greatest check and balance to Tribal Council is the General Council.

Please, vote “yes.”

**Brenda Tuomi**  
Roll #1438

### Dear *Smoke Signals*:

The hour is late as I write this letter. Many of you might have already made up your minds on the constitutional election. If you are on the fence, let me help.

Enrollment has been a divisive issue since 1999, when we created two classes of Tribal members. One class consists of those who can pass on all their Indian blood as Grand Ronde blood, meaning people on or descended from the Restoration Roll. Then we have those who cannot, which is really anybody enrolled since 1984, but without an ancestor on the Restoration Roll. Such people would have had Grand Ronde ancestry at some point, just not that one roll.

With a Tribal history going back to the 1800s, one that includes numerous rolls and records and families who can trace their lineage to before the invention of the telephone, it is strange to think that one roll should be elevated above them all. But in 1999, worried about “roll jumpers” and with the start of cash distributions known as per capita, Tribal members voted to make it this way, to have a privileged class. In doing so, many Tribal families were forced into the “split family” situation where one child is enrolled and the other is not, despite having the same parents.

As expected, privilege is not readily shared. If you read through the letters urging you to vote “no,” look at the roll numbers of the authors. Many are three-digit roll numbers, meaning they are on the Restoration Roll, including several of my fellow Tribal Council members. They belong to that privileged class, and do not intend to share that privilege. From a Darwinian standpoint, it makes sense. Their families are set. But they use the red herring approach of distracting you with false notions like how this will create “new” split families or how bundling is evil, despite having tried to put forth a “bundled” amendment last year.

Last summer’s bundled and blind “Parent on the Roll” amendment, the one where no data of impacts was needed or even wanted, would have expanded that privileged class and deliberately ignored the plights of other families. Which is why I found it unconscionable to proceed without helping these other families who we have known for nearly two decades now have legitimate ancestral ties, but who, again, failed to get their names or names of ancestors on that one roll.

For these reasons, please vote “yes,” and put the 1999 amendment behind us.

Regarding the other amendment Initiative & Referendum, I can think of no reason not to vote “yes.” Seriously. Some statements made about the amendment are woefully inaccurate, such as that it will make amending the Constitution easier or that Tribal Council members can have their way with unlimited power. The whole point of referendum is to allow Tribal members to undo a council decision. If I was “power hungry” as a Tribal Council member, why on earth would I make it easier for the general membership to undo one of my decisions? I think partisan politics is guiding many “no” votes. Our political arena has become like Republicans and Democrats. Some don’t like the council who made the proposal, so vote “no.”

Please vote “yes” if you, as a Tribal member and General Council member, want more authority in Grand Ronde’s governance. If you are comfortable letting Tribal Council run everything, then vote “no.” It’s that simple.

Thank you for taking the time to read this.

**Chris Mercier**  
Roll #1821

## Adult Members’ Trust and Minors’ Custodial & Rabbi Trust Funds

Investments in the Adult Members’ Trust Fund and the Minors’ Custodial and Rabbi Trust Funds are updated each business day.

If you are a trust participant and/or if you are the parent/guardian of a minor member, you can access and review your balance and your minor child’s balance by visiting [www.401Save.com](http://www.401Save.com).

To log-in, the initial User ID is your (or your child’s) Social Security number, and the initial Password is “00” followed by your (or your child’s) membership number. Once logged in, you can customize your User ID and password for security purposes.

If you have any trouble logging in to or using the system, contact the 401Save Call Center at 1-888-700-0808 between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. Pacific Time, Monday through Friday. ■