

LETTERS

Dear Smoke Signals readers,

At the Tribal Council meeting on Wednesday, Aug. 21, a Tribal member asked a question about a perceived lack of coverage by Smoke Signals on controversial issues being discussed on social media, including but not limited to, various Facebook accounts.

The Smoke Signals Editorial Board works with the Smoke Signals editor and staff to uphold the Independent Tribal Free Press Ordinance, address attempts to interfere with the ordinance (such as blocking access for reporters or censorship in the stories published) and helps create a path for staff to cover stories for the membership that are timely, factual and deemed newsworthy to Tribal members.

Please know that we are very intentional about touting the adoption of the Independent Tribal Free Press Ordinance because it is something we should be proud of. The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde is only one of five Tribes in the United States that has an independent press. This is a laudable achievement in Indian Country and a significant benefit to the membership.

Developing a free press took significant collaboration between Smoke Signals staff, the current and prior editors, Tribal Council, the Tribal attorney and others to create an ordinance Tribal Council felt proud to support, knowing it would increase the quality of factual information being shared with the membership.

Our staff believes in reporting with integrity, discovering the truth, and most importantly, in government transparency and accountability.

The Independent Tribal Free Press Ordinance has garnered national attention and we all should be proud of that.

With that said, having a free press comes with a special responsibility, especially for Tribal nations. Facebook groups were created (with the very noble intention) of allowing us to share information with members who live outside of the area, or those who can't attend meetings as often and want to be informed. Social media, if used correctly, can be a fantastic way to enhance the flow of information. However, some sites are used to spread opinions, rumors and misinformation.

Smoke Signals has a responsibility to present all sides of a story, which means they must include and cite credible, verifiable sources, double-check all facts, and adhere to Human Resources standards of employee privacy and confidentiality. During the Aug. 21 meeting, Smoke Signals was rightfully described as a source of information that Tribal members can rely on and trust. We agree 100%. You can trust the information you read in Smoke Signals. As a board and as staff, we proudly uphold a code of ethics put forth by the Society of Professional Journalists and the Indigenous Journalists Association, as all professional journalists do.

One of the tenets of that code of ethics is to minimize harm whenever possible. This means not publishing information that is untrue or unprovable.

Many of the issues being discussed on Facebook involve employees, and in addition to being impartial and fair, Smoke Signals staff must respect the privacy of any member or employee being accused of improper behavior and allow for unfettered due process. If the employee wishes to discuss the matter or it rises to the level of a criminal offense that is being adjudicated through the court system, Smoke Signals may decide to cover it depending on verifiable facts and if the alleged offense presents a potential health, safety or financial threat.

Furthermore, it is irresponsible journalism to address comments from anonymous and uncorroborated sources and pseudonyms, which often are part of these online conversations.

Additionally, Smoke Signals is a small Tribal department, which provides award-winning journalism to the members and monitors several Tribal social media platforms. Smoke Signals will not address rumors or conversations happening online or other places simply because they are salacious. The membership has shared with us over the years what kinds of information they want to see in the publication, and that's what staff focuses on providing.

Finally, we want to stress the importance of connecting with Smoke Signals staff or an Editorial Board member directly as a first step to addressing any concern or story idea you have. As a reminder, Tribal Council doesn't supervise, persuade or determine the stories that Smoke Signals investigates or publishes, so issues will not be resolved by them.

Any issues or concerns are always welcome for discussion and discourse. If you want to talk to an Editorial Board member, the entire Editorial Board welcomes input from members, and the Smoke Signals editor does as well.

To contact the Editorial Board, email Editorial.Board@grandronde.org. To contact Smoke Signals, email news@grandronde.org.

Sincerely,

Grand Ronde Editorial Board
Mia Prickett, chair
Shelley Hanson, vice chair
Tracy Moreland, secretary
Angie Sears, member
Andy Jenness, member

TRIBAL OFFICE CLOSURES

Tribal offices will be closed on Monday, Sept. 2, in observance of Labor Day. Offices will also be closed on Friday, Sept. 27 in observance of National Native American Day.

smok signalz

PUBLICATIONS OFFICE

9615 Grand Ronde Road, Grand Ronde, OR 97347
1-800-422-0232 • FAX: 503-879-2173

Website: www.smokesignals.org
Email: news@grandronde.org
Email: Editorial.Board@grandronde.org

X (Formerly Twitter): CTGRsmoksignalz
www.facebook.com/SmokeSignalsCTGR/
www.youtube.com/c/SmokeSignalsChannel

DANIELLE HARRISON PUBLICATIONS MANAGER / EDITOR 503-879-4663 danielle.harrison@grandronde.org	MICHELLE ALAIMO PHOTOJOURNALIST / ASSISTANT EDITOR 503-879-1961 michelle.alaimo@grandronde.org
JUSTIN PHILLIPS PRODUCTION SPECIALIST 503-879-2190 justin.phillips@grandronde.org	SAMUEL F. BRIGGS III GRAPHIC DESIGN SPECIALIST 503-879-1416 samuel.briggs@grandronde.org
KAMIAH KOCH SOCIAL MEDIA / DIGITAL JOURNALIST 503-879-1461 kamiah.koch@grandronde.org	NICOLE MONTESANO STAFF WRITER 503-879-1463 nicole.montesano@grandronde.org
KATHERINE WARREN SECRETARY / ADVERTISING 503-879-1466 • katherine.warren-steffensmier@grandronde.org	

DEADLINE DATE	ISSUE DATE	MEMBERS OF:
Monday, Sept. 9	Sept. 15	Indigenous Journalists Association
Tuesday, Sept. 24	Oct. 1	Oregon Newspaper Publishers Assoc.
Monday, Oct. 7.....	Oct. 15	2022 IJA General Excellence
Friday, Oct. 25	Nov. 1	2023 IJA General Excellence

EDITORIAL POLICY

Smoke Signals, a publication of the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde Community of Oregon, is published twice a month. No portion of this publication may be reprinted without permission.

Our editorial policy is intended to encourage input from Tribal members and readers about stories printed in the Tribal newspaper. However, all letters received must be signed by the author, an address must be given and a phone number or email address must be included for verification purposes. Full addresses and phone numbers will not be published unless requested. Letters must be 400 words or less.

Smoke Signals reserves the right to edit letters and to refuse letters that are determined to contain libelous statements or personal attacks on individuals, staff, Tribal administration or Tribal Council. Not all letters are guaranteed publication upon submission. Letters to the editor are the opinions and views of the writer. Published letters do not necessarily reflect the opinions of Smoke Signals.

2024 TRIBAL COUNCIL

tribalcouncil@grandronde.org

CHERYLE A. KENNEDY Tribal Council Chairwoman — ext. 2352 cheryle.kennedy@grandronde.org	BRENDA TUOMI — ext. 2300 brenda.tuomi@grandronde.org
CHRIS MERCIER Tribal Council Vice Chair — ext. 1444 chris.mercier@grandronde.org	MATTHEW HALLER — ext. 1777 matthew.haller@grandronde.org
MICHAEL CHERRY Tribal Council Secretary — ext. 4555 michael.cherry@grandronde.org	JON A. GEORGE — ext. 2355 jon.george@grandronde.org
KATHLEEN GEORGE — ext. 2305 kathleen.george@grandronde.org	LISA LENO — ext. 1770 lisaleno@grandronde.org
	DENISE HARVEY — ext. 2353 denise.harvey@grandronde.org