

Keynote Address - Forrest J. Gerard, Continued:

I am particularly honored to share the program with Senator Mark Hatfield, who was so instrumental in securing the passage of the legislation that restored federal recognition to the Siletz Tribe.

I believe that the purpose of a keynote address is not only to present and discuss the issues which are of primary interest to the audience - but to do so in a manner that will arouse unity and enthusiasm. I shall endeavor to meet this test.

While pondering on a theme for my remarks, an episode occurred recently that gave rise to the title of this address: "The Journey From the A-Frame to the Website." Before describing this episode, allow me to provide some historical perspective to my remarks by briefly tracing my long and rewarding relationship with the tribe and its leaders.

PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP

My first encounter with the tribe occurred in the mid-1970's, while attending a National Congress of American Indians convention in Portland as a professional staff representative of the Senate Committee on Interior & Insular Affairs. During this meeting, Charles Wilkinson, your competent (and persistent) advocate, convinced me to attend a meeting of the Restoration Council at Siletz. Accompanied by the late Joe Lane and his wife, we immediately left the NCAI convention, along with a legal counsel from the House Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs.

Two things immediately impressed me at that meeting of the Restoration Council. *First*, the earnest and strong commitment of that council to achieve its goal of restoration as a federally-recognized Indian tribe. And *second*, the stark reality that the council had virtually no physical or financial resources at their disposal to achieve this goal. This was evidenced by the fact that the meeting place took place in an old, renovated "A-Frame" building.

Nonetheless, the Council made a compelling case and motivated me to make a personal commitment to exercise whatever influence I possessed on the Committee staff to help the tribal council achieve its restoration goal.

Incidentally, before we move on, it is important that we pay tribute to the vision, determination and sacrifices made by the pre-restoration councils. Now let's fast-forward to the episode I alluded to earlier.

As a part-time consultant to the tribal council, I recently attended a meeting in the casino boardroom. Several reports were presented by staff, and when the chairman of the tribal gaming commission completed a briefing on draft rules and regulations, he requested their comments with a fast turnaround.

At this stage, I found myself comparing this modern-day, functional meeting space with the modest "A-Frame" space that was used 20 years ago. At this same moment, one of the council members, who was perusing the draft document, raised her head and asked the commission chairman: "Do you have a 'Website'?"

Her question abruptly shook me from my reverie and brought me back to the present reality: The Siletz Tribal Council has not only made the transition from the old A-Frame meeting space but it has also made the transition to a working tribal council ready and able to handle the *new issues* using *new technology*.

It was this episode that prompted me to label my address: "*The Journey From the A-Frame to the Website.*"

* * * * *

But to fully understand the underlying meaning of the tribal journey from restoration to the current time, we must begin by establishing that the aboriginal homeland of the Siletz Tribe - consisting of 30 bands and tribes - was made up of a vast land base stretching from the Columbia River to the Klamath River and from the Cascade Range to the Pacific Ocean. The bountiful products from the rivers and streams, the forests and the ocean provided the tribe with a secure existence.

However, the lust for land to accommodate early settlement triggered governmental actions that eventually decimated the tribe's once rich homeland.

Subsequently, a Presidential Executive Order in 1855 established a 19 million acre coastal reservation as a "permanent" home for the tribe. Yet, once again, the federal government found the ways and means to alienate virtually all of this newly-created reservation to satisfy settlement demands for even more land.

We must now look back on this tribal history - distressing as it may be - and recall that the aboriginal confederated tribes, despite the loss of their homelands, managed to hold on to the thread of an enduring spirit and determination. This thread is the constant throughout this journey that has held the tribe together as a cohesive entity. This thread is a stimulus for us to redouble our efforts to help the contemporary confederated tribes to continue to improve their collective quality of life.

Given the chronic conditions of poverty to be found on most Indian reservations today, the history of the federal government's dealings with the tribes of this nation can hardly be characterized as "fair and honorable dealings." I do not believe, therefore, that it would be melodramatic to suggest that the Siletz Tribe, historical and contemporary, paid a heavier price than most

other tribes in their dealings with the federal government.

First, the *historical* tribes endured the loss of its aboriginal homelands and cultural attributes.

Second, the *contemporary* tribes paid the ultimate price - termination of their relationship with the Federal Government -- which resulted in the loss of services and benefits, trust protections, sovereignty, self-governance, etc.

These sweeping events collectively contributed to displacement of families, excessive morbidity and mortality rates and the disruption of traditional cultural and governmental practices.

Fortunately, though, the destructive and failed federal termination policies of the 1950's gave way to a more enlightened Indian policy in the 1970's. These policies embodied the concept of "self-determination without termination," and were characterized by

- * *repudiation* of termination as a national Indian policy,

- * *adoption* of self-determination without termination as the new national Indian policy, and

- * *concession* that sovereign Indian tribes have the right to assume management and control over the program and funds of the Bureau of Indian Affairs and Indian Health Service.

Further, Congress gave substance and tangible meaning to this more constructive Indian policy by restoring federal recognition to two tribes' whose federal relations were terminated in the 1950's. First, Public Law 93-197 restored federal recognition to the Menominee Tribe of Wisconsin in 1973; and second, Public Law 95-195 restored federal recognition to the Siletz Tribe of Oregon on November 18, 1977. Other so-called "terminated" tribes enjoyed restoration in successive years, as well.

Congress also enacted various laws in the 1970's to give meaning and substance to this new and positive Indian policy; notably the Indian Self-Determination & Education Assistance Act of 1975.

This convergence of the restoration of the Siletz tribe with the self-determination policy proved to be a fortuitous circumstance that provided the tribe with the opportunity to exert maximum "self-determination" by assuming control and management of its own programs with minimal federal intrusion from the Bureau of Indian Affairs and Indian Health Service. The Council manages approximately \$8 million dollars annually from these two agencies.

The tribe adeptly snatched this opportunity while managing to hold the federal government to its self-imposed trust responsibilities.

It is worth noting that the succession of post-restoration Siletz Tribal Councils have systematically crafted an orderly process which