

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

National Congress of American Indians (NCAI)

The NCAI Executive Council held its winter session in Washington, D.C., from Feb. 22 to March 1, 2002.

I attended the conference along with council members Jane John and Rosemary Landis; Brenda Bremner, Siletz general manager; and Zak Zakoji, consultant. Franklin Ducheneaux coordinated our congressional contacts.

The conference included presentations on such diverse topics as education by Bill Mehojah, director of the Office of Indian Education, and Congressman Dale Kildee; judicial issues affecting Indian tribes by Associate Justice Stephen Breyer of the U.S. Supreme Court; health issues by Indian Health Service Director Michael Trujillo; and federal appropriations affecting Indian programs by Assistant Secretary Neal McCaleb.

Individuals giving their views on Indian issues included both Republican and Democratic U.S. legislators: House members Frank Pallone of New Jersey, George Nethercutt of Washington, and Nick Rahall of West Virginia; and Senators Ben Nighthorse Campbell of Colorado, Daniel Inouye of Hawaii, Tim Johnson of South Dakota, and John McCain of Arizona.



Chairman Delores Pigsley

In addition to attending the general sessions, the Siletz representatives attended Senate Committee on Indian Affairs hearings on the "Management of Indian Trust Funds" and on the "Rulings of the U.S. Supreme Court Affecting Tribal Government Powers and Authorities."

In previous issues of Siletz News, I have commented on the Department of the Interior's controversial proposal to restructure the BIA's trust services. A special NCAI task force has been sifting through the various tribal proposals addressing this issue and the Senate Committee has been providing oversight on the restructuring process.

I also have commented on the increasing threat to tribal sovereignty. The Senate Committee held a hearing on this issue with testimony from legal scholars, legislators, and tribal officials. The NCAI's Sovereignty Protection Task Force has been addressing this critical issue. Tribes across the country, including the Siletz Tribe, have been involved in, and contributing to, this important effort.

Tribal Election Issue

As of mid-March, the controversy over the recent tribal election had not been resolved. I'm sure that by the time you read this, however, the Tribal Court will have obtained sufficient information to make a final ruling. And once again, we will have survived another election controversy with the Siletz constitutional, judicial, and electoral processes very much intact.

Whatever decision the court makes will not satisfy everyone but we, the Siletz Tribe, have the capacity – the strength – to resolve such issues and move on.

About My Mother, Maude Lane

In closing my chairman's report, I would like to take the liberty of sharing

with you my thoughts about my mother, who died on March 12 after celebrating her 100th birthday nearly a year ago.

She passed away peacefully, having lived a full, productive life, leaving behind a large, loving, extended family and a legacy for the Siletz Tribe – for all of us – of strength and dignity.

It's hard to believe, but it was just 35 years before my mother was born that vast changes had taken place in the history of the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians. It was at a time when the Rogue River War was just coming to an end, when massacres of Siletz Indians had taken place.

Our tribes, my forefathers among them, were compelled to cede their aboriginal homelands and be moved to the Coast or Siletz Reservation which, by ratified treaties, was promised as their permanent reservation.

It was during this period, 1865 to be exact, that our Coast Reservation was arbitrarily reduced by 200,000 acres and just 10 years later, further drastically reduced by another executive order.

To put all this in perspective, the Vietnam War happened 35 years ago and Pearl Harbor 60 years ago. Yet, we are constantly reminded of those terrible historical events. The fact is, what happened to the Siletz Tribe isn't ancient history. It wasn't as long ago as the Crusades or Revolutionary War.

What happened to the Siletz Tribe took place just 35 years before my mother was born. She, her descendents, and the Siletz people have felt the full brunt of what happened in the 1850s, 1860s, and 1870s, and the events that followed.

But through it all, good times and bad, my mother maintained her dignity and faith in the future. She instilled in all her Siletz offspring the pride of the Siletz Tribe, of our Indian heritage, and in being Indian.

I am proud of the fact that her spirit – her zest for living and the dignity with which she lived life – was infectious. I and a multitude of others who knew her, Indians and non-Indians alike, were enriched by that spirit.

To the editor:

A number of us have been reviewing records of the 2002 Tribal Council election. What is amazing is that **not one** of the records supports the certification of the election results.

For example, the poll book, supposedly the official record, indicates only 680 voters who submitted mail-in ballots; the signature envelopes total 679, and the election director's handwritten log has 684 (including three voters recorded twice): Yet, the certification indicates 682 mail-in ballots. The election director stated that he made a "numbering" error when he changed the oral certification from 694 to 682. As admitted, **no one actually counted the ballots!**

Not only are the numbers inconsistent, the recording of ballots received did not match with the actual voters. Some who voted are not recorded in the poll book and some who did not vote are recorded as having

voted. Tribal members had ballots sent back to them for signatures, yet some were accepted without proper signatures.

This is the first year that tribal members were allowed to view the poll book, or any record for that matter. With the innumerable inconsistencies in the records, past elections must be called into question.

Lori Johnson, a candidate in the last election, has filed a complaint in Tribal Court to void the election and call for a new election – an election that would be fair to each and every General Council member. Lori requested that the court consider the case as a class action, including every eligible voter. The judge's response was that, in essence, she already is representing the membership.

Incidentally, Lori filed against the election director, who was contracted by the Tribal Council to conduct the

election. His contract (available from the Tribal Council secretary) clearly states that he is an independent contractor, responsible for conducting the election and responsible for his own legal representation. The membership should know that the Tribal Council directed the tribal attorney to represent an independent contractor against the membership.

If the Tribal Court makes another political decision that erodes the rights of the membership (as it has in the past), then it is up to us to exercise our constitutionally protected right to fair elections.

If you would like further information, please contact me.

Sincerely,
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