

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

It was in September, 25 years ago, that we were told that our Restoration Act would be passed by the U.S. Congress.

I was on the Tribal Council then (the youngest, I might add) inspired by other council members who had the vision to fight so long with such persistence and fortitude for our tribe to be restored. I was proud to be part of that council.

It was at our Restoration Celebration two months later in a building at the county fairgrounds that Tribal Chairman Art Bensell announced that he had just received a phone call from President Jimmy Carter that the Restoration Act had been signed – it was now law! Very few tribal members in attendance were aware that the president would call on that very day so Chairman Bensell could make the announcement at that very time and place.

The place erupted with cheers! There was joy you can't imagine!

It had snowed that day, the first time in November in many years. I remember the building was freezing cold. The fire marshal showed up and said he would have to shut the place down if we used the heaters that were brought in to help heat the place. We



Chairman Delores Pigsley

complished – but nothing could chill our spirits. In fact, our spirits kept us warm throughout that frigid day and evening.

I remember that many thoughts flooded my mind on that day – of my brother, Joe, who led the initial restoration effort, and of Janie, his wife, who financed most of what Joe did on behalf of the tribe, including lobbying trips to Washington, D.C. I wondered then what my dad would have thought about restoration and knew that he, too, would have been filled with pride.

I will never forget the pow-wow. It was freezing, but we had a wonderful

meal, danced all evening long, and had some great pictures taken for the local newspaper. Our elders, many of whom are no longer with us today, joined in the dances.

I also thought about the important implications restoration had for our people. During all those years that we were "terminated" (hard to believe now, but it's true), I, like other Siletz Indians, was not eligible for services because we were not considered "Indians" and did not have Indian preference for employment or eligibility for educational or other programs. Restoration changed all that!

That evening, many BIA workers reminded me that our job had just begun. We needed to develop, among other things, a tribal budget and an official roll with the assistance of BIA officials.

On Nov. 16, we will celebrate our 25th Restoration Anniversary. Guest speakers will be long-time friends and tribal advocates – former Gov. Victor Atiyeh and Warm Springs General Manager Rudy Clements. Former council members will be honored for their service over the past 25 years and for those who served to make restoration possible.



To the editor:

I would like to ask the youth to take some time and read this letter with an open mind and ears.

At this time, I'm in the Oregon State Correctional Institution for committing a robbery on Dec. 31, 2001. I'm currently serving a 36-month sentence for this crime. I've been in four different prisons in the past nine months. None of these places is a "nice" place to stay.

When I was on the streets, I was so lost in the drugs, alcohol, and materialism. I was at times an angry, sad, and deceiving person who didn't care who I hurt, even my own family. Some say marijuana, or weed, calms you down or helps take the edge off. Why is there that edge in your day that you have to smoke weed?

There are a lot of things that we hide from everyone else and ourselves.

If we just dealt with some of our problems, we wouldn't have that edge there. Do you steal, borrow from, or deceive your loved ones for money to get it? If you do, then your addiction has become a habit that will only grow and cause more problems in your life.

I'm trying to make this as short as possible, so please bear with me.

Alcohol is worse than marijuana, I think, but that does not make weed good. Alcohol was my worst enemy on the streets. I've been on probation since I was 12 years old and that's more than 1/3 of my life! I would say that 80 percent of the time I got into trouble was because of alcohol.

I still can't tell you how much alcohol has done to my life, to family relations, to my friends also. Alcohol is so readily available, i.e., home, streets, or your friends. You don't have to be drinking yourself to get in trouble.

People around you can get you into trouble by their own decisions.

Alcohol impairs your ability to make easy decisions. I'm asking if you can please take time to look at your life so you won't have to end up in prison. Take time to evaluate your decisions so you don't hurt yourself or the ones you love. I often get mail/pictures from home and feel so sad at what I did and wish I could be free again.

I feel that I now have some tools to stay away from crime, drugs, and alcohol. I have 19 months until I get out, so there's a lot I can still learn and the possibilities are endless. So please take the time to give your actions some thought.

Thanks for taking the time to read this. I just want the best for our tribal members and youth.

Sincerely,
Chris VanDaam

We'll be reminded that during the years that we were "terminated," we had no federally recognized government. All of our land, except the cemetery, had been lost. It's hard to imagine now, but the General Council didn't even have a place of our own to meet.

We have come a long way since then. It took the hard work of many Siletz people to secure restoration and what we have achieved since then – our health clinic and programs; our educational, housing and employment programs; and our gaming enterprise, among others.

Our tribal government institutions, including our Constitution, have served us well for the past 25 years. We have had our internal tribal controversies. We've not only endured, but have grown stronger as a tribe because of the basic tribal institutions that helped us cope with those controversies.

In a real sense, restoration wasn't only a congressional act – it's a continuing tribal process of renewal and growth. For one thing, it's a process of helping our younger generation be sensitive to, and knowledgeable about, our Siletz culture.

This is exemplified by Robert Kentta's remarkable historical research and Cheryl and Bud Lane's efforts to bring our traditional dancing back home and promote our native basket weaving and language. Bud, Robert, and Snoball, among others, were largely responsible for the construction of the Siletz Dance House and of involving our tribal youth in Siletz Feather Dancing.

I had an opportunity recently to attend the Basket Weavers Annual Gathering in Omak, Wash. Bud displayed many of his beautiful baskets and was a featured basket weaver. The Siletz Tribe is being considered to host the next annual Basket Weaver's Gathering at Chinook Winds.

In summary, Nov. 16 will be a major event not only celebrating the congressional act that restored our tribe, but also remembering our long struggle to be restored, our many achievements since then, and that restoration also is a process of continued growth of the Siletz Tribe.

We urge all our tribal members to attend and welcome all our non-Indian friends to come celebrate with us!