

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Oregon Indian Day at State Capitol

The early history of the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians of Oregon is basically the same as the history of tribes across the country: Indian-white hostility and conflicts, forced removal from their homelands, and the wholesale theft of Indian lands (which some Oregon legislators actively lobbied for in Congress early in our state's history).

What has happened in Oregon during the past few years is remarkable.

Who would have thought that chairmen of the nine Oregon tribes would be sitting at the podium of the Oregon State Legislature where the speaker of the house and other state officials customarily sit?

And who would have thought that tribal officials and tribal youth would be sitting in the state legislators' seats? If you had been there, that's exactly what you would have seen May 20 during American Indian week at the State Capitol. Times have certainly changed!

On that day, Indian color guards and the chairmen of the nine Oregon tribes were escorted to the podium by Indian youth to the beat of Portland's Urban Indian Center drummers.

Gov. Ted Kulongoski, who spoke to the assembled tribal and state representatives and who signed the Indian Day Proclamation, also was escorted to the podium by Indian youth.

The governor reminded us that it was 30 years ago that the Commission on Indian Services, composed of both tribal and state officials, was officially established by the Legislature to address Indian issues.

The concept of government-to-government relations, he said, isn't just a "buzz word" but an important concept "we are taking to heart ... based on mutual respect and dialogue." He pointed out that the cluster groups composed of tribal and state officials continue to meet regularly on a government-to-government basis to address concrete issues. "We worked hard," he said, "to bring us to this point."

All nine tribal chairmen had an opportunity to speak. We all touched on the importance and achievements of state/tribal relations in Oregon. Several spoke of tribes as sovereigns, a principle articulated in Gov. John Kitzhaber's executive order of May 1996. The annual



Chairman Delores Pigsley

summit meetings of top tribal and state officials and the intervening cluster groups of tribal officials and staff have evolved based on mutual respect and listening to, and acting on, tribal concerns.

Others further expressed the concept of sovereignty, saying that "tribal councils have a duty to see to it that treaties are upheld" and that "sovereigns are not all alike; there are differences among our heritages."

One speaker, reflecting the feelings of other tribal officials, recognized Karen Quigley, the commission's executive director, who has played a key role in coordinating tribal/state communications.

A primary theme throughout was concern for Indian children and youth. The tribes' progress in education was recognized. I, for one, called attention to the fact that while there were only two college graduates when the Siletz Tribe was restored, we now have 35. And even Burns Paiute, as small as it is, has two members who at present are each working on a Ph.D.

At the same time, we were reminded that tribes like the Burns Paiute and Warm Springs are plagued by unemployment – the college-educated have few jobs to return home to, which underscores the need for greater economic opportunities.

Sen. Kate Brown, Rep. Tom Butler, and Secretary of State Bill Bradbury then spoke, one about the "healing process ... learning from the past"; another about the need to "honor all cultures, the value of working with tribes and to strive to honor and make government-to-government relations successful"; and another of "ensuring that our present won't be at the expense of the future ... of working without compromising the future generations."

I believe a high point of the day was the Siletz Feather Dancers, representing all Siletz high school students, led by Bud Lane and Robert Kentta. They danced just as our forefathers did in aboriginal times in their special, traditional regalia.

The performance, seldom seen outside our traditional Dance House in Siletz, was an emotional experience for everyone present, reminding us that Indian tribes are indeed unique, distinguished culturally from one another.

I was very proud of our feather dancers for what they contributed to make American Indian Day a very special and meaningful day in the state capitol for all who attended.

In closing, I want to express my thanks to the Culture Department and to Katrina and Ashley Reis, Ami Case, Monique Lane, Jennifer Butler, Karli Jay, and Caleb Bremner, who helped make our contribution to American Indian Day a success.

Purchase of the Shilo

The official signing that transferred ownership of the Shilo Inns hotel and luxury suites in Lincoln City took place June 1. "Chinook Winds Casino Resort" is how the phone is now answered.

It was pretty exciting for us to sign these documents, for the Siletz Tribe to become owners of the hotel adjacent to our casino, overlooking the Pacific Ocean.

Memorial Services in Washington, D.C., and Siletz

I had the opportunity to accompany six of our eight World War II veterans – Buck Downey, Eddie Collins, Alfred Lane Jr., Ken Hatch, Calvin Van Pelt, and Ed Ben – to the dedication of the World War II Memorial in Washington,



Katrina Reis, Ashley Reis, Karli Jay, Caleb Bremner, Jennifer Butler, Ami Case, and Monique Lane represent the tribe at the State Capitol.

D.C. Emmitt Douthit and John Roe Sr. also are WWII veterans, but were unable to attend.

The Siletz Tribe sponsored the veterans and their spouses/attendants to travel to Washington to attend this historic event. Councilman Bud Lane and I represented the Siletz Tribe. Several other veterans' family members attended at their own expense. The Siletz Tribe was well represented at this historic event on the Capitol Mall.

Our veterans visited many of the nation's significant monuments and contacted other veterans who served in their units. Three U.S. presidents attended as well as many other important government officials.

Our veterans were on the mall from 9 a.m. until the conclusion of the ceremonies at 3:30 p.m. I was proud that our tribe recognized the Siletz veterans by sponsoring them to take part in this event. After all, they dedicated their lives for us during World War II. Many of those who attended said this was one of the most memorable events of their lives.

On behalf of our tribe, I want to thank our veterans – **thank you!**

Our own tribal Memorial Day ceremony took place on Memorial Day in Siletz. Our veterans, who looked fine in their new shirts, also were appropriately present for our local ceremony. The elders and area offices presented wreaths in memory of all those who have passed on.

The Dancing Again Singers opened and closed the ceremony. Guest speaker Gayla Jones, our former council secretary and retired master sergeant, gave a wonderfully moving speech.

I want to thank all who participated in this event and the Culture Committee for preparing the delicious lunch.