

TRIBAL PROGRAM NEWS



Construction progresses on the tribal administration building in the mid-1990s.

Restoration, con't from page 1

Following in the footsteps of the Menominees in Wisconsin in 1972, the leadership of the Siletz Tribe, after years of meetings that brought Tribal members together to chase a dream, achieved Restoration in 1977.

Tribal Chairman Delores Pigsley remembered what the situation was like when membership learned that then-President Jimmy Carter had signed the Tribe's Restoration Bill - Public Law 95-195.

"The old building at the county fairgrounds was freezing," she said. "The fire marshal told us that if we used the heaters we brought in to warm the place up, he would shut us down."

Pigsley said no one wanted to be shut down. The gathering was too important.

"We couldn't let that happen," she said. "Food was being prepared in the kitchen. We were ready for a pow-wow and there was much anticipation. At the dinner that evening, Tribal Chairman Art Bensell made the announcement that he had just received a call from President Jimmy Carter himself, who had signed into law the Siletz Restoration Act. We were once again a federally recognized Tribe."

Pigsley remembered the feeling in the room after the landmark announcement was shared with the people.

"The place exploded with absolute joy," she said. "Our warmth that freezing November day was the pride and exhilaration that came from what we had accomplished. We were Restored after a long and difficult struggle."

Siletz became the second Tribe in the nation and the first in Oregon to achieve Restoration for its people.

Just two years prior to Restoration, Siletz became a member of the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians and the National Congress of American Indians. The first congressional hearing on Restoration for Siletz was held in Washington, D.C., in 1976.

"In the midst of our euphoria that evening, Bureau of Indian Affairs officials reminded us that our work had just begun," said Pigsley. "We needed to officially elect a government, write and adopt a constitution and prepare an updated roll."

In 1979, a Tribal Constitution was adopted.

Less than three years after the Tribe was restored, it was able to secure the return of Government Hill in Siletz in 1980. Also that year, an election was held and a Tribal Council was sworn in. Leadership then submitted a Reservation Plan to Congress that called for the return of 3,660 acres of former Reservation lands to the Tribe as a Reservation land base.

The Siletz Reservation Act in 1980 created a 3,660-acre Reservation.

In 1983, the Tribe established a Tribal Court and also celebrated the opening of the Tribal Community Center on Government Hill. The Tribe established a business arm in 1985 with the opening of the Siletz Tribal Economic Development Corporation. In 1985, the Tribe employed 54 people and used the Tribal budget to build the comfort station and improve the pow-wow grounds with lights, electricity, water and a public address system.

In 1995, the pow-wow grounds were named the Pauline Ricks Memorial Pow-Wow Grounds to honor Tribal leader Pauline Ricks. She was born in Siletz, was active in Tribal affairs and served on Tribal Council, and helped write the Tribal Constitution. Ricks was remembered for organizing nearly every pow-wow in the Siletz area during her lifetime and acted as the honored Whipwoman at the annual Nesika Illahee Pow-Wow.

Fifty-four tribal homes were built and opened to families in 1987 on land the Tribe was able to purchase in Siletz.

In September 1989, an enthusiastic group of Siletz Tribal Elders from Washington, Oregon and California gathered to take a return trip to the Rogue River area. They jet-boated from Gold Beach up the Rogue River and down memory lane.

The next major purchase the Tribe made was when it bought the former Rock Creek State Fish Hatchery in 1990. The Tribe also added 15 more Tribal homes in 1990 and negotiated three new service area counties in the Portland area.

The Tribe broke a lot of ground over the next few years when it made major accomplishments, like opening the Siletz Community Health Clinic in 1991, building the new 30,000-square-

foot Tribal Administration Building in 1995 and dedicating both the Chinook Winds permanent gaming facility and the Siletz ceremonial Dance House in 1996. The clinic featured medical, dental, laboratory, optometry and pharmacy services and the new administration building housed all Tribal programs in one place for the first time.

More importantly, in 1991 the Tribe became a self-governance tribe by negotiating its first self-governance compact with the Bureau of Indian Affairs, successfully negotiated a gaming compact with the State of Oregon, opened a temporary gaming facility on May 25, 1995, and a permanent casino with the opening of Chinook Winds in Lincoln City on June 28, 1996.

In 1994, the "Run to the Rogue" event became an important annual ritual in the modern-day Tribe. The Rogue River Valley is the traditional homelands of many of the Tribal ancestors who were forced to relocate to the Coast or Siletz Reservation in the 1850s. The "Run" event was established as a way to honor those ancestors, increase tribal history and cultural connections and promote a healthy lifestyle among the membership. Many Tribal members of all ages participate in the 234-mile journey every year with friends and family members.

Culturally, one of the most important accomplishments of the Tribe in the modern day took place when the leadership made the opening of the Dance House a priority for completion in 1994. The Dance House held its first tribal ceremony in June 1996, at the dedication of the house. A Feather Dance was held for several nights, the first to be in a ceremonial house since the Indian agent had them all burned around 1870.

Tribal families in Siletz celebrated the new century by moving into 20 new homes on Tribal land in 2000.

Tribal leadership began to funnel revenues from the Tribe's gaming venture into the hands of membership in 2001 when the first per capita payments were made. The economic impact of the casino continued to benefit the people of the Tribe when 50 children a day began receiving day care services at the Tribe's Tenas Illahee Child Care Center that opened in 2002.

The Tribe also purchased an office complex near Chinook Winds to house the Siletz Tribal Business Corporation and the Tribe's Gaming Commission in 2002. The Tribe also joined with the Grand Ronde Tribe to establish a business park development on property co-owned by the Tribes in Keizer near Chemawa Indian School.

The property, known as Chemawa Station, is currently being developed as an economic venture by both Tribes as a partner project with the city of Keizer's larger development known as Keizer Station. The project recently received approval from President George Bush to move ahead as an economic development for both Tribes. One of the goals of the retail business park-style project is to provide another employment opportunity for nearby students of Chemawa Indian School.

The Tribe supported local education in Siletz when it assisted in opening a charter school, Siletz Valley School, in 2003. The Tribe used 2004 as a platform to launch several new businesses, including the purchase of the Shilo Inn hotel next to Chinook Winds and the opening of Logan Road RV Park in Lincoln City. The Tribe also maintained the only gas station in Siletz when it bought and reopened the Siletz Gas & Mini-Mart.

Tribal leadership continued the diversification of the membership's economic future when it finalized the purchase and remodel of the former Lakeside Golf Course and by adding it to the casino and hotel complex, transformed the property into the upscale Chinook Winds Golf Resort. 2005 also marked the year that the Tribe's important Eugene-area office moved into a Tribally owned building for the first time.

In 2006, the Tribe opened Hee Hee Illahee RV Resort and Salem area office/flex warehouse in Salem and in 2007 the Tribe continued to give back to the community around it when it supported the establishment of the new Siletz Public Library.

Now in 2007, the Tribe invites everyone to join in celebrating 30 years of Restoration at the Siletz Tribal Restoration Pow-Wow at Chinook Winds Casino Resort in Lincoln City on Nov. 17 at 6 p.m.



Logs start to outline the frame of the Dance House in the early stages of construction in the mid-1990s.