

## TRIBAL MEMBER NEWS

### Tribal Members Coach Adult Football Team in Washington State High School Football Coach Helps Son Guide Grays Harbor Bearcats After Tragedy That Nearly Changed Everything

By Brent Merrill

Siletz Tribal Elder Ron Hoiness, who lives with his family in Grays Harbor, Washington, is helping coach the Grays Harbor Bearcats of the Northwest Football League's Northwest Division. Hoiness is helping the head coach – his son, Tribal member Todd Hoiness.

Ron, 62, said he considers himself fortunate to be involved in football. Truth is, he is lucky to be alive.

"I'm just the luckiest guy in the whole world," said Ron Hoiness in what could actually be an understatement considering he nearly died in a motorcycle accident near Boise, Idaho, a little more than a year ago last June 14.

Ron, whose mom is Ila Hoiness and whose dad was the late Ray Hoiness, is a teacher and the head football coach at Lake Quinault High School for nine years now and recently returned to the job and the team. He works four hours a day at the school while he makes his way back from the accident.

Ron recovered from the accident at Saint Alphonsus Medical Center in Boise before being transferred to a hospital rehabilitation center where he received physical and occupational therapy. He suffered multiple skull fractures, swelling of the brain and several broken bones when he had to lay his bike down and skidded more than 100 feet before being thrown. Hoiness was attended by Washington County paramedics until he was taken by helicopter to Saint Alphonsus.

"According to anyone who knows anything about my dad's type of brain injury, his recovery thus far rates as a minor miracle – let alone that he even survived the crash – but those who know him well are not surprised nor am I," said Todd. "The doctors said his weightlifting and training prior to the wreck were a major factor in his physical recovery. I feel fortunate to have him with us in all regards."

Ron said he loves being around the school and around his team since getting back to school after his recovery for half days and team events like wood cuts.

The Lake Quinault Elks' football team dedicated their 2008 season to their fallen coach and they continued the success they had enjoyed in previous seasons under Ron's leadership. Assistant Coach Brad Carstenson took over for Ron and led the team to a 9-1 regular season record and a state playoff game against the Lummi Nation's Lummi High School, which was 10-1. The team defeated Lummi to advance in the state playoffs, but lost in the semi-finals.

"It has been fun being around the kids," said Ron. "It helps."

Ron played football in high school and in college. He played his first two years of high school football in Siletz before the family moved to Washington.

Ron finished his high school playing days at Robert A. Long High School in Longview. He then went on to play college football at Central Washington University in Ellensburg.

Ron played running back in high school and college and made an impact at Central Washington in his first season on the team as a freshman. He came off the bench and promptly led a game-winning drive with three important runs.

The following year, as a sophomore, Ron was honored for averaging nearly 5 yards a carry and scoring a touchdown against Western Washington. Two months later, he was leading the league in rushing yards and total offense.

In 1968, the players for Central Washington's football team selected Ron as the team's best blocker and most inspirational player.

Ron, whose grandmother was May Downey, is one of eight children – brothers C.D., Rocky and Harold, and sisters Val, Susie, Marlene and Corkie.

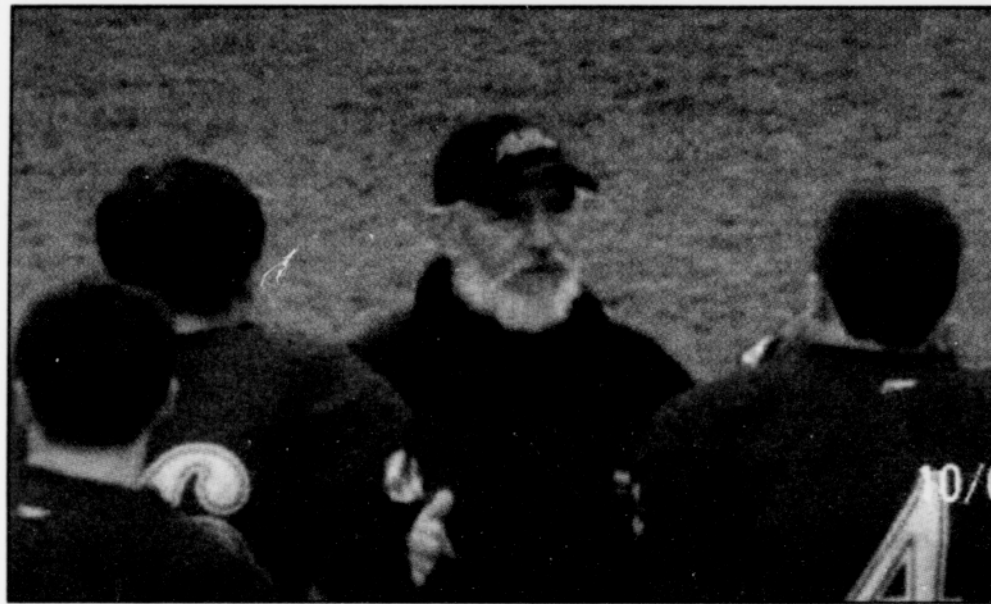
Ron also enjoys spending time with his son coaching the Bearcats. The Bearcats franchise was established in 2008 and the team is set to return for its second season in 2009 with Siletz Tribal member Todd Hoiness as the head coach.

Todd, who was formerly the head football coach and assistant wrestling coach at Hoquiam High School, coached at the University of Idaho from 1990-2001 following his college playing career for the Vandals.

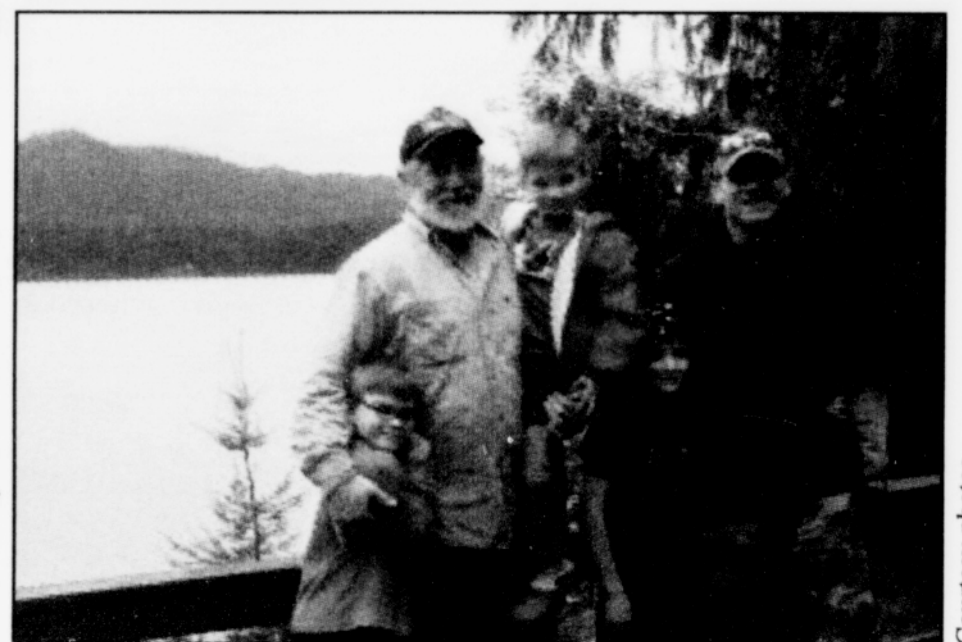
Todd was a star running back on the football team for Hoquiam High School in the 1980s and played tailback at Idaho from 1985 through 1989. Todd played for legendary football coach Dennis Erickson, who won a national championship while coaching at the University of Miami and later coached the Seattle Seahawks, San Francisco 49ers, Oregon State University Beavers and currently is the head football coach at Arizona State University.

"My dad has been a part of football and coaching since 1969 and he is an invaluable resource for me as a coach and source of information," said Todd about his father Ron's experience. "It has been a goal of mine since I began coaching in 1990 at the University of Idaho to find a way for us to coach together somehow. The formation of the Grays Harbor Bearcats has been that opportunity and I've thoroughly enjoyed it. He has a genuine enthusiasm for the game and the athletes that no one can ignore and I look forward to using his leadership and guidance with the players and coaches to get our expansion team started in the right direction."

The Grays Harbor Bearcats received permission from the Hoquiam City Council in February to play their home games at Olympic Stadium in Hoquiam and so far the team has sold 8,000 season tickets.



**MIRACLE MAN**  
– Siletz Tribal Elder Ron Hoiness, who lives in Washington State with his wife Jody, is helping his son Todd coach The Grays Harbor Bearcats. Ron, who is recovering from a major motorcycle accident, is the head football coach at Lake Quinault High School.



Ron with his son Sev and grandsons Cole, Caden and Case at Lake Quinault.

Courtesy photos

Ron also said the team has a website where interested football fans can read the Bearcats' mission statement and check out the team's 2009 Northwest Football League (NWFL) schedule – [www.ghbearcats.com](http://www.ghbearcats.com).

"We have high expectations for ourselves as an expansion team," said Todd of the Bearcats' upcoming season. "We have some experienced players on the team and I'm sure we will be competitive."

Padded practices began May 5 at Elma High School and the first game of the season was June 27 in Portland, Ore., against the Portland Raiders. The team's first home game is set for July 11.

The Bearcats will appear in Oregon on July 25 in Southern Oregon and Sept. 12 in Cottage Grove. The team's final home game is Sept. 26 against the East County Blackshirts.

"We look forward to playing games in Oregon so we can see friends and family," said Todd.

Ron said team sponsorship options are outlined in the team sponsorship packets that can be secured by visiting the team's website. Ron said the team is a non-profit organization with unpaid players and that everyone who donates to the cause gets a tax write-off for charitable contributions. Sponsorship packages range from full exposure at \$10,000 down to \$200.

The NWFL has been around for nine years now and boasts 120 teams nationwide. The Northwest Division has teams in Oregon, Washington and British Columbia.

The underlying goal of the NWFL players, coaches, cheerleaders and owners is to give time to local charities and community groups that help underprivileged children in concert with the National Football League's Alumni Caring for Kids program. Ron said the team's website has had more than 13,000 hits to date.

The league is made up of true adventurers and the fan who aspires to be a team owner – in this case, the Bearcats' owners Don Orton and Chris Raffelson also are players on the team.

Truth is no one is more of an adventurer than Ron Hoiness. He survived tragedy and he made it back. It's easy to imagine a Bearcat as a strong-willed, Wolverine-like fighter who would never give up. Sounds kind of like Siletz Tribal Elder Ron Hoiness, who made it back from tragedy to be an inspiration.