

Photo by Brent Merrill



Left: Tribal Council members Sharon Edenfield, Reggie Butler Sr., Tina Retasket, Delores Pigsley and Vic Atiyeh

Right: Vicky Butler, Sonya Moody-Jurado and Frank Aspria

Below, right: Ed Ben and Wayne Chulick



Photo by Diane Rodriguez

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32nd Annual Restoration Celebration and Pow-Wow Held in Lincoln City

"Siletz people do what needs to be done, then afterwards check to see if it was impossible."

By Brent Merrill

The 32nd Annual Siletz Restoration Celebration was held Nov. 14 at Chinook Winds Casino Resort in Lincoln City. The daylong event featured drummers, dancers and Native artists from throughout the Northwest participating in the celebration pow-wow.

Emcee Nick Sixkiller made opening remarks for the event and then there was the traditional invocation opening by Tribal royalty and visiting royalty. Royalty this year included Miss Siletz Jennifer Easter, Junior Miss Siletz Rose Pigsley, Junior Miss Siletz Princess Ashleigh Ramirez, Junior Miss Siletz Princess Leslie Lundy, Little Miss Siletz Makia Woodruff, Little Miss Siletz Princess Amber Yarbrough and Miss Chemawa Carolina Vera-Simmons (pictured above).

Tribal Chairman Delores Pigsley welcomed the audience and commented on the importance of Restoration before the kids from the Tribal Head Start program performed. Guests were treated to a video presentation that honored Indian Veterans titled "Honoring Our Siletz Tribal Veterans."

The keynote speaker this year was John Volkman, who explained that he was very happy to have been asked to speak to the gathered audience on the importance of the event.

He said he had been reminded of the Siletz Tribe when Sen. Ted Kennedy passed away earlier this year.

"I was thinking back to the Senate hearing room in March of 1976, where the Tribe first made its case for Restoration to Sen. (Mark) Hatfield's committee," said Volkman. "The Tribe had been working on the Restoration proposal for a couple of years and it had been a lot of hard work by a lot of people. It was quite a group — Joe Lane, Art Bensell, Pauline Ricks, Ed Ben, Dee Pigsley, Sister Francella, Bob Tom and others. The Tribe had a very effective council, it seemed like they talked to everybody in the state not just once, but again and again."

Volkman remembered when the Tribal Council selected Professor Charles Wilkinson to lead a legal team to represent the Tribe in its efforts to achieve Restora-

tion. Volkman praised Wilkinson, saying he was a tremendous asset to the Tribe.

Volkman then acknowledged Hatfield's efforts and explained that Hatfield's help was crucial to the Tribe. He said

Hatfield's influence helped set up important meetings and hearings that furthered the Tribe's cause.

"The Tribe spent countless hours preparing," said Volkman of the total effort to achieve Restoration. "They found money to pay for airfares and hotels and when we got to Washington, D.C., we contacted everyone we could

think of that might be able to help."

Volkman got back to his Kennedy reference when he explained that Ted Kennedy had been a big help for Wilkinson when Wilkinson had worked on the successful Restoration of the Menominee Tribe in Wisconsin (the first Tribe to ever

achieve federal restoration of their status as a sovereign Indian nation).

"We didn't expect Kennedy to take much of an interest in our bill," said Volkman. "Massachusetts is about as far away from Oregon as you can get, but we thought it would be worth touching base to see if he could poke his head in at our hearing. We drafted a very short statement he could use, but we didn't have high expectations."

According to Volkman, the hearings on the Tribe's Restoration bill began the next day.

"We were excited," said Volkman. "A senate room is really something, it's ornate and you see famous people walking down the hallway ... It's an imposing place."

Volkman explained the political and regional climate then in regards to Indian rights as being much different than it is today. He said that The Oregonian came out publicly against the Tribe's Restoration bill and the Eugene Register-Guard warned its readers about possible Indian nets in the Alsea River if the Tribe reached its goal of Restoration.

"We definitely knew we had a fight on our hands," he said. "Nevertheless, the hearings went well."



John Volkman