

Former Oregon Governor Victor Atiyeh passed away July 20 at the age of 91. He was governor of Oregon from 1979 to 1987.

Gov. Atiyeh was a very good friend to the Siletz Tribe as he was to all Tribes. As governor, he showed much respect to Tribes and was just a good person and interested in helping, whatever the situation.

He was our special guest over the past several years; he never missed our Restoration Celebrations. He was just a good friend and a great statesman.

Gov. Atiyeh was Oregon's 32nd governor. Prior to his election as governor, he had served in the Oregon Legislature since 1959.

He had many accomplishments, but we will always remember him as our good friend. We will miss his smile.

I last visited him at Warm Springs (in June) and we planned to get together for dinner soon.

At the 2011 Restoration Celebration, I introduced Gov. Atiyeh, who always appreciated a few minutes to address the crowd, and mentioned that he had joined the Siletz Tribe for the first Restoration Celebration in 1977. The following is part of an article that ran in the December 2011 issue of *Siletz News*:

"Gov. Atiyeh was instrumental in creating the Commission on Indian Services (in 1975), which still operates today," she (Pigsley) said. "Like Sen. Hatfield, Gov. Atiyeh has been very responsive to Indian issues and has been a very good friend to our Tribe."



File photo

Victor Atiyeh at the 2012 Siletz Tribal Restoration Pow-Wow, wearing a shirt made by members of the Warm Springs Tribe.

Atiyeh said he's had a wonderful experience with American Indians in Oregon and is particularly close with the Siletz Tribe.

"My parents came from Syria; I'm the son of an immigrant. Two things about that – It just still astounds me that the son of an immigrant can become a governor in the United States," he said. "Then I think to myself, I just got here. You've been here – and you've been here for generations.

And yet there's a closeness between the two of us."

Atiyeh said he met Art Bensell, former Siletz Tribal chairman, when Bensell was named to the Commission on Indian Services.

"At the time, I only thought that you and the other Native Americans in Oregon were not dealing with the state, you only were dealing on the national level. The state could provide services that could be taken advantage of and we needed a bridge," he said.

As Atiyeh's relationship with the Tribe has grown, he's become familiar with so many things.

"I had no concept that you'd been terminated and were working for restoration. I just knew you were out there and needed help. I learned so many things about you – how warm and welcoming you are, also how wise you are," he said.

He's seen how culture can hold a group together and is something that shouldn't be lost.

"I have an interest in your retaining your culture. Again I want to get personal because it relates to me," he said. "I never learned the Arabic language. My children don't know the Arabic language. I've heard it, they haven't. What's happened



Delores Pigsley

in the Atiyeh family is that we've lost our heritage. It's gone.

"Those are the kinds of dangers that you face all the time. What I'm suggesting is not just those who feel keenly about it, you young people should feel keenly about learning your own language. And that draws them closer to your culture."

He thanked the Tribe for many wonderful memories, including the "pow-wows and the dances even I can do – if they're slow enough."

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Deadline for the September issue is Aug. 11.

Submission of articles and photos is encouraged.

Please see the Passages Policy on page 20 when submitting items for Passages.

Member of the Native American Journalists Association

Elders Council Meeting

No meeting in August

Siletz Elder potlucks are held monthly at 6 p.m. on the Monday before the regularly scheduled Elders meeting. Please bring a potluck dish you would like to share.

For more information, contact the Elders Program at 800-922-1399, ext. 1261, or 541-444-8261.

Nuu-wee-ya' (our words)

Introduction to the Athabaskan language

Open to Tribal members of all ages

<p style="text-align: center;">Siletz</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Tribal Community Center</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Aug. 4 – 6-8 p.m. Sept. 8 – 6-8 p.m.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Portland</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Portland Area Office</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Aug. 11 – 6-8 p.m. Sept. 15 – 6-8 p.m.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Eugene</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Eugene Area Office</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Aug. 5 – 6-8 p.m. Sept. 9 – 6-8 p.m.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Salem</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Salem Area Office</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Aug. 12 – 6-8 p.m. Sept. 16 – 6-8 p.m.</p>

Classes begin with basic instruction and progress over the year. They also are a refresher course for more-advanced students. Come and join other members of your community and Tribe in learning to speak one of our ancient languages.

We also have equipment in the Cultural Department available for use in grinding and drilling shell or pine nuts or other applications. If you need to use the equipment, call the number below to set up an appointment.

For more information, contact Bud Lane at the Siletz Cultural Department at 541-444-8320 or 800-922-1399, ext. 1320; or email budl@ctsi.nsn.us.