

Does Keizer sit on stolen land?

BY CHARLES GLENN
Of the *Keizertimes*

The April 4 Keizer city council meeting opened with what Mayor Cathy Clark called a “teaching moment,” as senior members of the Confederated Tribes of the Siletz and local historian SuAnn Reddick offered a Native American perspective about the land on which Keizer sits.



Courtesy Photo - Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde

A prior city council meeting, on March 21, provided the impetus for the history lesson. About 20 local and out-of-state tribal activists attended last month's meeting, carrying signs which read “You are on stolen land,” and “Keizer is on Kalapuya land.” Several registered to speak at the public hearing portion, and used their time to express outrage over the Reawaken America Tour being held at Volcanoes stadium on April 1-2, which they characterized as racist and

white supremacist.

The event was being held at a private venue and the city has no provision for preventing the stadium owners from renting the space out. Event security did not permit *Keizertimes* to enter and report on it, but Keizer Police Chief John Teague said there were no significant disturbances beyond some traffic congestion and a couple of minor altercations between event-goers and protestors.

Regardless of what may or may not be the rally organizer's ultimate political goals, Clark didn't want to miss the opportunity to clear up misconceptions and misunderstandings the meeting may have generated. Representatives from Grande Ronde and Siletz were invited, but the Grande Ronde contingent was pulled away at the last minute and was unable to attend.

Confederated Tribes of the Siletz chairpersons Delores Pigsley and Bud Lane spoke to the council about why these issues are important to the local tribes, their deep connection to the land and how history has shaped relations between the tribes and white settlers.

“All of Oregon was tribal before the settlers came,” said Pigsley, who attended Keizer schools as a youth. She pointed out that the Kalapuya are just one tribe among a confederation of 50 different Willamette Valley peoples who trace their lineage back to before Europeans arrived to settle North America.

“We have seven different treaties that were signed,” she said. “All them say things like ‘as long as water flows and grass grows’ and all that ... which really never happened.”

The initial treaty involving Kalapuya land had the tribe - along with all the other Oregon tribes - moving to the Oregon coast and joining what was supposed to be the Siletz Reservation.

“It wasn't until 1857 that the Grande Ronde was established as a reservation, and those who didn't move to Siletz were moved to Grande Ronde.”

Lane, vice chairman of the Siletz tribal council, who teaches history courses for tribal schools, said the truth about the land is complicated.

“In the 1840s, the Land Donation Act was passed,” said Lane. “Land grants were given out at 360 acres apiece for settlers to come in and improve the land. Unfortunately the United States did not have title to Oregon at the time - they were giving out land without actually securing legal title. Hence you have a flurry of treaty-making signed in the 1850s ... that's because they were in a crunch to get title to land they had already settled on.”

He said the federal government policies toward the tribes came under scrutiny in later years, leading to the Restoration Acts. He explained that

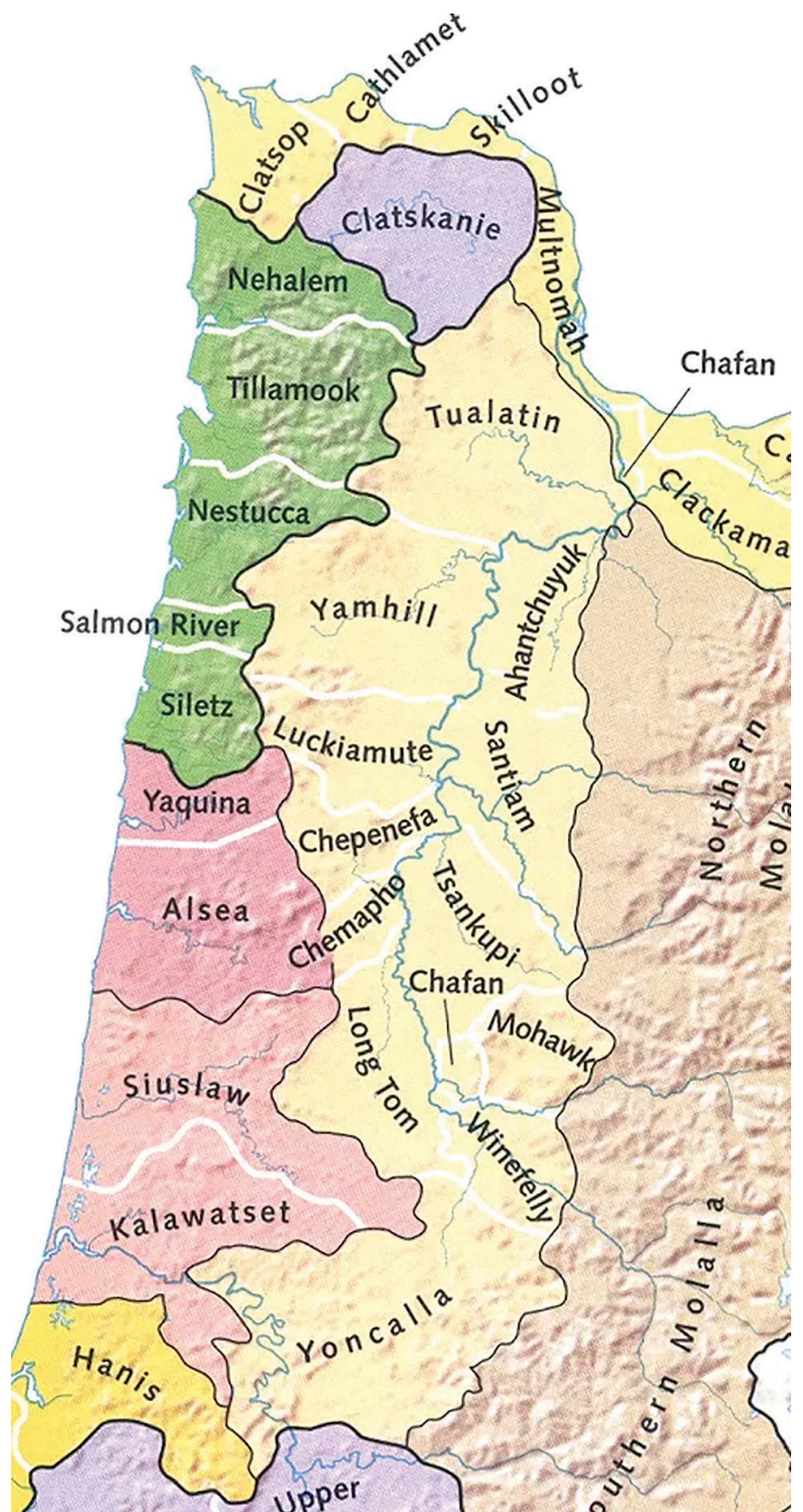


Photo courtesy Oregon Historical Society

much of this history can't be found in textbooks written before the 1970s, and work is on-going to put together a more complete tribal history for Willamette Valley.

“The rest is history, as they say,” said Lane. “We've been rebuilding since 1977 ... Senate Bill 13, passed a few years ago, makes an effort to tell Oregon's history through the tribe's perspective - making it mandatory in public schools that this curriculum be taught,” he said.

This emphasis on historical accuracy is ultimately about healing -both for the

tribes and the other people living in Oregon.

“To us, it's the way we heal,” said Lane. “It's the way we go forward - by recognizing and understanding the past, right or wrong - things that happened, how land was taken, how our people were treated - by recognizing those things, I think we can forge a better future together.”

SuAnn Reddick, an independent researcher and historian (and mother of councilor Elizabeth Smith), called into

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