

Siletz tribe celebrates coming home

Beaming with pride and tears welling in happiness, Siletz tribal members emanated satisfaction and triumph as they held their first restoration and reservation powwow on their own land. After 29 years without a home base they were celebrating coming home.

The sunny weekend was busy for those who were trying to make everything perfect for their celebration and the incoming well-wishers. Tribal council member Pauline Ricks, a resident of Springfield, Oregon, had to sit down several times to cry tears of joy, she said. She took upon herself the responsibility of clearing an area at the top of Government Hill, the site of the powwow. Before the event it was overgrown with weeds and brush. With the aid of volunteers the area was made ready. There were times, though, when she was frustrated but never willing to give up the task.

Such was the attitude of those who worked long and hard to get a

reservation established after having worked as long and hard to have the tribe restored to its original status after termination caused the disintegration of the tribe and the loss of the Siletz tribe's land.

There were many times when obstacles stood in the way according to Siletz tribal council chairman Art Bensell. Hunting and fishing rights had to be settled between the tribe and the state. There had to be many compromises.

But the joy of the end result was not diminished as a result of those compromises. The Siletz tribe now has a land base, a reservation consisting of land that once belonged to the Siletz people. Art Bensell says, "We own the property and we are celebrating the fact that the land is ours." And along with the land base they have once again regained their status as a tribe. It is a time for celebration.

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The cemetery on Government Hill in the city of Siletz was the only remaining possession of the Siletz tribe after their termination in 1954.

"We are celebrating the fact that the land is ours"

(Siletz Tribal Council chairman—Art Bensell)



Carline Easter of Springfield, Oregon was one of many exuberant Siletz tribal members who joined in the powwow festivities. Carline has represented the siletz tribe at many social functions over the past 7 years.

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by

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A young Siletz tribal member surveys the recently developed reservation plan. It is her people and her land, now.



Siletz tribal members led the grand entry as the first Siletz powwow opened celebrating restoral of tribal status and restoration of tribal land.