

TRIBAL GOVERNMENT: HOW IT WORKS FOR YOU

* Part four of this series will focus on the significant happenings that took place in Tribal history following termination and up to restoration.

Surviving the effects of termination was just the beginning of a long road of recovery by the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde. The success story of the Tribe is one of perseverance and determination.

Tribal members moved away from the reservation after the 1954 Termination Act in hopes of finding a better economic environment. Grand Ronde quickly became a garden of poverty and despair. In 1961, seven years later, the Tribe began to try to begin a process of reestablishment with the formation of a Cemetery Corporation.

The Corporation was officially founded in 1951. Support for this effort was provided by the remaining Tribal members in the community and grants from the state and county authorities. The Cemetery Committee also acted as an enrollment Committee. The Tribes' land had been reduced to 7 1/2 acres of cemetery. At one time the land totaled 69,000 acres. In 1968, termination as a policy was repudiated by the United States government. Yet, it would take the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde 21 years to gain restoration status. Statistics show that the Tribe lost, on the average, over 700 acres of land per year from 1857 (two years before Oregon became a state) to 1954.

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-Kathryn Harrison

According to restoration testimony by former Tribal Council Chairman Marvin Kimsey, the restoration effort got under way in 1972. The Tribe received a grant from the United States Government to conduct a census in 1973. In 1975 the Tribe reorganized and became a non-profit business corporation. According to information provided from N.A.P.O.L.S. attorney Ed Goodman the Tribe also adopted a Constitution at that time. When the restoration effort began membership statistics were established and updated. Regulations on blood quantum were established as well.

The Tribe became incorporated in hopes of attaining funding so that they could continue the process of restoration. For three years the Campaign for Human Development provided the Tribe with the funding necessary to pay for a restoration coordinator. Three consecutive grants were also obtained from the Administration for Native Americans. Those grants provided support to upgrade and train Tribal staff members. Also, the Chiles Foundation at one time supported a successful Tribal greenhouse project. 1975 also marked the beginning of the Tribes' relationship with the Native American Program Oregon Legal Services.

In October of 1983 Kathryn Harrison (who at that time was vice-chair of the Tribal Council and the Tribes' Community Organizer), Frank Harrison (the son of Kathryn and Council member), Jackie Colton (who had served the Tribal Council since 1976 as secretary/treasurer and had been the Tribes' planner since 1981), Karen Harrison (daughter of Kathryn and the Tribal student representative) and Marvin Kimsey (former Council Chairman and was at that time serving the Tribe as an Executive Director), all traveled to Washing-

ton D.C. on behalf of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde. The purpose of the trip was to seek restoration of the Tribe to a federally recognized Tribal status.

Kathryn Harrison, a descendant of the Molallas - a band of the Kalapuyas began the testimony before the United States' House Interior and Insular Affairs Committee (I.I.A.) with her recollections of the hardships she had witnessed befall her fellow Tribal members over the years. "Once we were happy and free in our own lands, we were seldom hungry for there was plenty for everyone. Land was always regarded as a living entity and sacred to my people but, it became important, too, to the white invaders," said Kathryn Harrison as she shared her memories with members of Congress. She went on to explain how in 1856 the "Trail of tears" began for the people that would eventually become the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde. "In a massive military roundup towards the north, our people were forced to leave their homes. Some tried to escape and were shot, some children became orphans, those who were too old or too weak to walk were stacked into wagons like they were sticks of wood, and no one was allowed to care for the sick or to bury the dead."

Harrison's testimony detailed what became a trial of strength just to survive. "And so it was, the soldiers moved them and, our journey through the un-history began." More soldiers then came to the so called reservation promising to preserve and protect. They also promised goods, foods, clothing, education and health care for all Tribal members and land enough for everyone to become farmers.

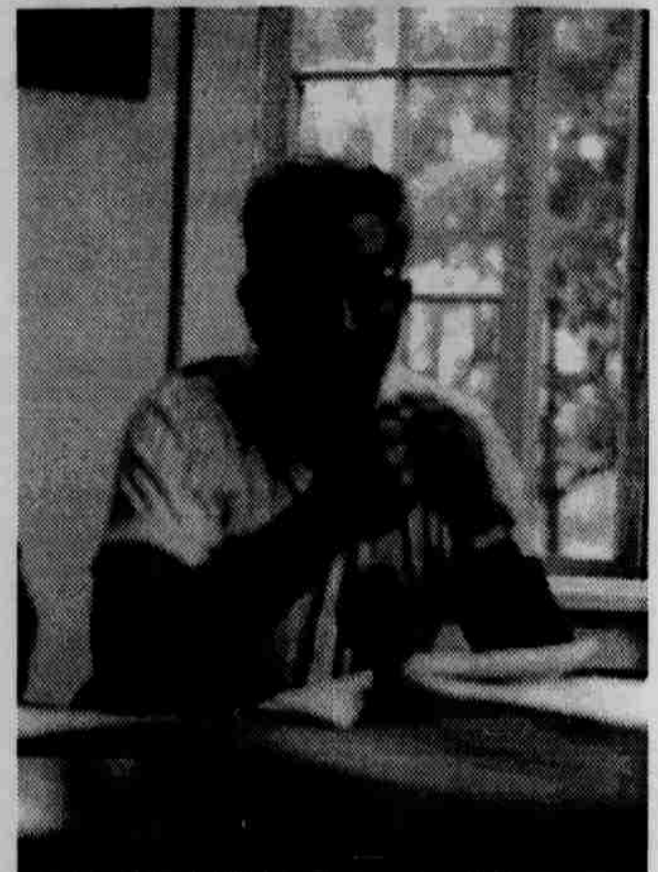


Kathryn Harrison

Harrison told the I.I.A. Committee how in 1954, the Termination Act began what she called the Tribes' second "Trail of tears." In her eyes it had been "a disaster."

When Frank Harrison got his turn to testify he informed the Committee that 25% of the Tribes' members suffered from chronic health problems, 24% were in need of medical attention but could not afford it, and 51% of the members lacked adequate dental care. According to figures Frank Harrison supplied to the Committee, the average unemployment figure for all Oregonians in 1982 was 11.3% which at that time was considered high. For Grand Ronde members unemployment averages reached as high as 37% in 1982. Also,

only 52% of the Tribes' members completed High School compared to 75% who graduated on the average statewide.



Marvin Kimsey.

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Marvin Kimsey enhanced the Tribes' chance for achieving restoration status when he explained how "the unity of the Tribe had prevailed when all seemed in doubt." He outlined how the Tribe wished to re-establish the trust relationship of the past with the current government of the United States.

Kimsey also detailed how if the Tribe were to achieve restoration, the benefits would be making an equal impact on young and old alike. "Our students could also benefit, after restoration, from assistance which enables students to plan educational careers after secondary school is completed. Many students entering college have been unable to compete their studies due to lack of funds."

Kimsey's most important contribution to the Tribe could have been when he told the Committee that the successful passage of the restoration bill before Congress would "restore the identity to the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde as a Tribe. It will correct injustices against the Tribe, from the first land cession to the final injustice of termination in 1954. Restoration would allow us to participate on an equal basis with other recognized Tribes in the areas of health, education, economic development and a betterment of the Community in which we live."

Restoration followed one month later when a bill that was supported by United States Representative Les AuCoin and United States Senator Mark O. Hatfield passed through the Congressional machine providing the Tribe with recognition, dignity, identity, and the opportunity for services that would benefit their families. The foundation for Tribal Government as it exists within the Tribe today had been established.