

ATNI UP-CLOSE

Termination Trauma

■ A recent study shows that past colonial policies still impact the psychological and social well-being of Indian Country.

By Oscar Johnson

The 1954 Termination Act which ushered scores of bills terminating U.S. recognition, relations and treaty obligations with 61 Indian tribes is more than just a blemish on the history records.

"Termination Trauma," psychological scars left in the aftermath of the 'termination era' of the 1950s and '60s, are still carried by many Native Americans, according to a recent independent study.

Trauma due to threats or experiences of physical harm, fear, hopelessness or horror that came with termination has left the majority of those surveyed with varying degrees of feelings of isolation, continued fear, survivors guilt, anxiety, anger, hostility and even nightmares, says Dr. Tom Ball.

Trauma that he says statistics show's passed on from one generation to the next.

Ball is a researcher for the Oregon Social Learning Center and former chair of the Klamath Tribe who revealed his findings at the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians conference in Grand Ronde last month.

"It's not just in the past, these statistics show us that these things are still bothering us today," says Ball.

A sample population of 98 Klamath members including men and women, old and young as well as those living off and on the reservation were surveyed on a variety of experiences and their affects, including those related to termination.

The study revealed high rates of Post Traumatic Syndrome Disorder (PTSD), which can cause someone to relive a traumatic experience; have symptoms such as hyperactivity; and avoid circumstances which bring the trauma to mind.

The statistics show 24 percent of those surveyed suffered from full PTSD some time in their life while 48 percent experienced partial PTSD.

(The distinction between full and partial PTSD denotes different forms of the disorder more than lesser or greater degrees, Ball says.)

The research also showed 11.2 percent of the Indians surveyed currently suffer from clinical symptoms of full PTSD and 15.3 percent of par-

tial PTSD, Ball says.

When compared to a similar survey of a non-Indian population in Winnipeg, Canada, showing 2 percent and 1.9 percent respectively for full and partial PTSD, the rate looks even worse.

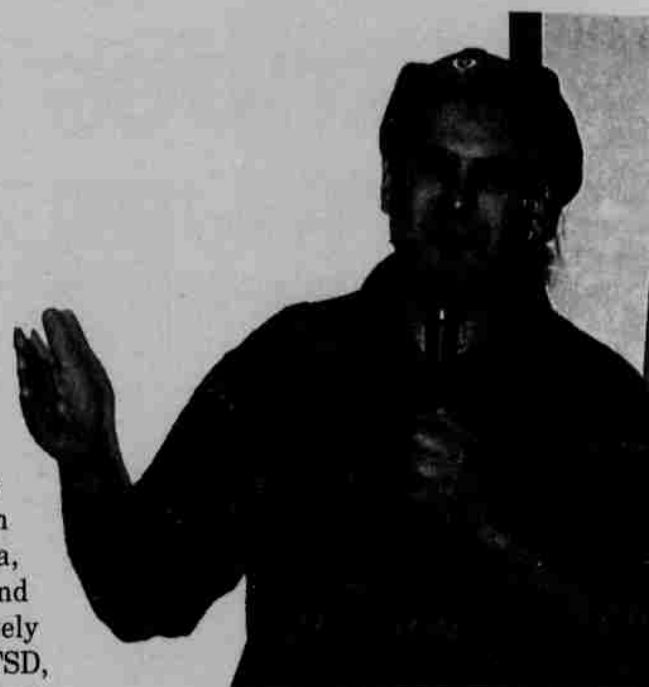
"That's one-fourth of that tribal sample currently suffering from PTSD," says Ball. "And none of them are receiving any mental health treatment."

Ball says there is also a connection between these symptoms and high rates of violence, drug and alcohol abuse and unemployment.

He notes that 100 percent of those showing signs of PTSD were unemployed.

Ball also draws a correlation between deeply embedded emotions such as anger and guilt with what he calls "internalized oppression" and "self hate" and says it is often expressed in substance abuse and violence to others who remind aggressors of themselves.

Ball believes the solution is to treat



Dr. Tom Ball, Oregon Social Learning Center researcher and former Klamath tribal chair, outlined his Termination Trauma survey showing the lasting affects of colonial policies on Native Americans during last month's ATNI conference at SMC.

the root cause of such problems.

He argues that the answer lies in mental health treatment but not just from the perspective of modern western medicine.

"This is a major mental health problem," says Ball. "We need to validate the problem. We need to look at our traditional methods of healing in a historical context."

Oregon Native American Week celebrated at State Capitol



For the third year in a row, Oregon Governor John Kitzhaber proclaimed the third week in May to be "Native American Week" in Oregon. The signing of the proclamation coincided with Tribal Information Day at the capitol in Salem on May 20. Here, Governor Kitzhaber poses with Grand Ronde Tribal Council Chair Kathryn Harrison (right), and her good friend, Cecelia (Charley) Bearchum of the Confederated Tribes of Umatilla. Harrison and Bearchum have known each other for most of their lives, ever since they were classmates at Chemawa Indian School. Left: Ali Holsclaw, Jr. Miss Grand Ronde, and Halona Butler, Miss Tiny Tot, represented the Tribe at the Information Day.

Photos by Tracy Dugan