

Reflections On Tribal Restoration, Part II

If you missed Part I, see the December 1, Issue.

By Angie Sears, Tribal Mentee

I was born in the 70's, which was nearly twenty years after termination. As a child I don't recall ever knowing that I was part of a terminated Tribe. I grew up knowing that I was Native American. When anyone asked of my heritage, I replied, "I'm Sioux and Grand Ronde."

I'm not sure if I was able to live my life as a Native person without question because of the distance I had between my home and the Grand Ronde reservation, or if it was simply the time that had passed since termination.

It wasn't until I approached early adulthood that I would realize the

other relatives. I think I was nine years-old when we were terminated," said Butler.

Butler explained that she didn't notice the more serious effects of termination until she got to high school and left the Grand Ronde community.

She remembers people telling her that she wasn't Indian. "I always yelled, well what do you do with the skin then," she laughed.

Butler attended Willamina High School. It was there that she began to realize the prejudices people outside the Grand Ronde community held for Native Americans. She missed a lot of school due to an illness that required hospitalization. As a result of her absence, the principal called her to a meeting with her teachers and told her that she would have to repeat her

of society and turned their back on their heritage in an attempt to fit in.

"People who were light-skinned wouldn't admit they were Indian anymore," said Butler. "Those of us with darker-skin couldn't get away from the prejudice."

"At that time it was not good to be Indian," said Jackie Provost, 55, Rogue River and Umpqua Tribal member. "You could get further in life by not being Indian, and that's how things got messed up."

"Many families were separated.



~ Jackie Provost, Tribal Elder

"We had to learn to walk in two worlds."

effects termination had on my family. At that time, we had already been restored as a Tribe and I had begun receiving Tribal assistance, mostly with medical benefits.

After termination the Grand Ronde people faced many hardships, including prejudice and identity issues. For some, these issues didn't have a great impact on their lives, but for others it was devastating at times. It changed their lives. Many families left the area searching for a better life, some of them going so far as attempting to conceal their identity as a Native person.

Cherie Butler, 65, Rogue River and Clackamas Tribal member, recalls friends and family members moving away after termination.

"It was during the depression. My mother was working. She was separated before termination, so I lived with my grandparents or

junior year.

"It hurt when he said that," said Butler.

She explained that her grades had improved during that time, and that her teachers had asked the principal to pass her because she had done a really good job.

The principal refused and said, "No, let one Indian through and you have to let them all through," recalled Butler.

After the devastating realization of prejudice, Butler went to Salem, Oregon to live with her sister. She began to look for work, only to find that no one would even accept her applications.

After a long search, she explained her difficulties to the manager of a restaurant near her apartment and finally got a job as a waitress.

Prejudice was a big problem for many Native people at that time, and some families caved to the pressures

Kids were sent to Catholic boarding schools and weren't allowed to speak their Native language. They were forced to live the "white way." They were called heathens and made to feel ashamed to be Indians," said Provost. "We had to learn to walk in two worlds."

Jackie Whisler, 55, Rogue River, Umpqua, Kalapuya, Clackamas, Chinook, and Chasta Tribal member, spent most of her childhood in the Grand Ronde community. Whisler attended St. Michael's Catholic School through the third grade, when her family moved to Brookings, Oregon for work. Life in Brookings was much different than the life she was used to in Grand Ronde. The schools in Brookings were much larger than the three-room school she was accustomed to, and they didn't accept the credentials of St. Michael's. This meant that she would have to attend spe-

cial classes to make up all the work she had done the previous three years of school. This is also where she would experience racism for the first of two times in her life.

On the first day at her new school, Whisler, a fair skinned girl with blonde hair, who wouldn't typically resemble an Indian, experienced racism from her fourth grade teacher. "My teacher said, "Class we have a new student today; her name is Jackie, and she's an Indian." I heard gasps; I was toward the front of the room, so I turned around to see what had happened behind me, but they were all looking at me," said Whisler. "She was racist because she said, "Jackie, tell the class, do you have running water and electricity on the reservation?" I was stunned because nothing like this had ever happened to me before, but I replied, "No, not yet; they just got us out of our moccasins." And from that point on she hated me."

After the sixth grade, Whisler and her family moved back to the Grand Ronde community, where she would rejoin the Grand Ronde kids at St. Michael's. It was there that she could feel comfortable and fit in.

During the early days of termination there was a pattern of prejudice and identity issues forming that some of our Tribal people couldn't avoid, but fortunately not all of our people would share this pattern.

Mike Larsen, 58, Umpqua and Chinook Tribal member, grew up in Grand Ronde and was fortunate enough to miss out on the prejudices and racism against Indians during early the termination era.

"I didn't really experience it, but my brother and some of my relatives did," said Larsen. "I seemed to be accepted into the clicks in school because of my love for sports."

Larsen explained that he and his friends didn't wonder who was Indian and who was not. "Nobody really talked about it," he said. "The Indian and non-Indian kids just kind of got along." ■

Look for Reflections On Restoration Part III coming soon.

Tribal Canned Food Drive Competition Ends With Everyone A Winner



As part of their annual Christmas festivities, the Health & Wellness Center conducted a food drive for two local food banks: Grand Ronde Food Bank and Grand Sheramina. This year, they challenged the rest of the Tribal Campus to beat them. The grand total of items brought in this year was 10,071 compared to last year's total of 2,761. The food drive went through the month of November and ended on Monday, December 18. There were many events held around the Tribal campus to help bring in canned foods. Grants Developer Bob McEldery (l to r), Healthcare Benefits Administrator Allyson LeCatsas and Human Resources Specialist Mary Leith smile for a picture during a canned food luncheon in which they helped prepare and serve the food.



Photos by Toby McClary