

# Book examines Termination, Restoration of Tribes

Former Oregonian reporter Roberta Ulrich details reasons behind and effects of federal policy toward Indians

By Dean Rhodes

Smoke Signals editor

Former Oregonian reporter Roberta Ulrich spent most of the last decade thoroughly researching and writing a book about the federal government's disastrous policy of terminating Native American Tribes in the 1950s, as well as Tribal efforts to regain federal recognition beginning in the 1970s.

"American Indian Nations from Termination to Restoration, 1953-2006" was published Dec. 1, 2010, by the University of Nebraska Press.

The book benefits greatly from Ulrich's dogged reporter's researching skills and her ability to present a balanced and documented account of what occurred, letting readers determine who the victims and villains are in this real-life tale of federal policy, rigid ideology and individual despair. In addition, Ulrich's straightforward newspaper writing style never bogs down the narrative.

Ulrich, who covered Tribes for the Oregonian from 1993 until her retirement in 1996, previously had written "Empty Nets: Indians, Dams, and the Columbia River" before tackling Termination and Restoration.

"Termination had always seemed to me to be another injustice against the Tribes," she says during a telephone interview from her Beaverton home. "It was something that, when I looked at it, that no one had really done it from the point of view or the effects on Indian people. ... To me, the worst thing about Termination is what it did to individual Indians."

Ulrich's research is unquestionably detailed. She visited National Archives offices in Seattle, Washington, D.C., and Maryland, poring over numerous obscure documents. She spent many hours reading congressional hearing transcripts at Lewis & Clark College's Law Library.

Tribes, such as the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, supplied documents to review and copy.

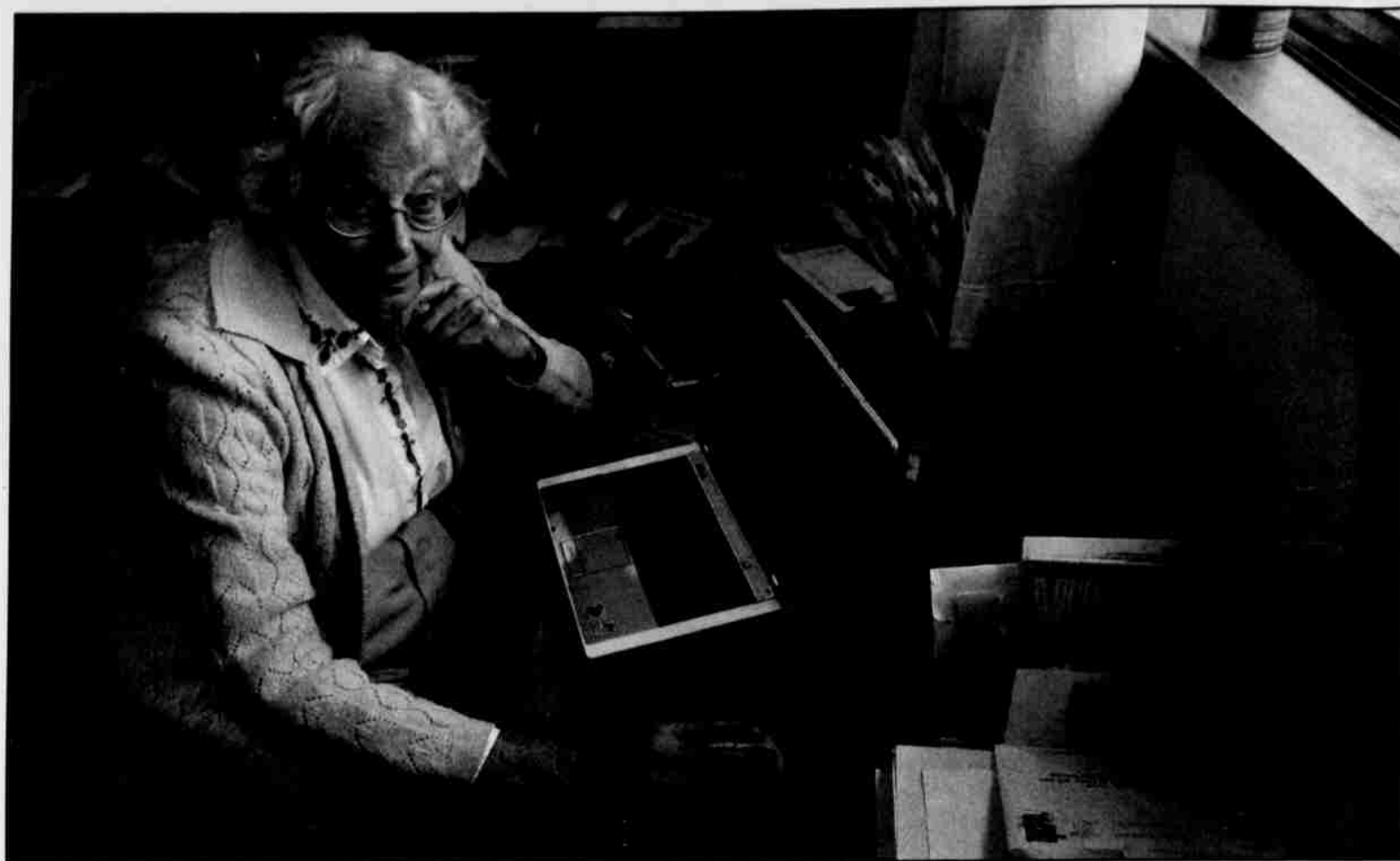
She talked in person and on the phone with Native American leaders across the country, including Grand Ronde Elders Leon "Chip" Tom and Kathryn Harrison.

"I tried to base as much of it as I could on interviews with people who remembered Termination and who had suffered the effects of it," Ulrich says.

In her opening chapter, titled "Policy: Kill the Indians," she reminds readers of the many attempts by the federal government to "kill the Indian, save the man."

From land grabs, warfare, broken treaties, disease, forced relocations, Tribal boarding schools and elimination of traditional food supplies, such as the buffalo, Native American Tribes and their cultures were constantly under attack during this country's history.

"At the end of these efforts," she



Photos by Michelle Alaimo

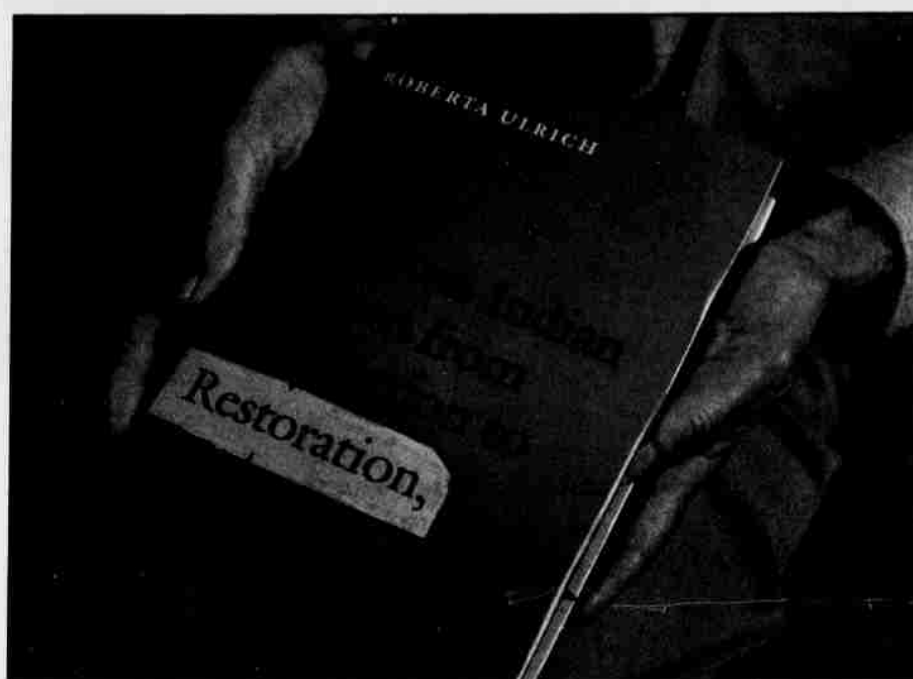
Above, Roberta Ulrich, a former Oregonian reporter who currently lives in Beaverton, has written a book titled "American Indian Nations from Termination to Restoration, 1953-2006." She interviewed Tribal Elders Leon "Chip" Tom and Kathryn Harrison for the book in addition to Native American leaders across the country.

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writes, "Indians were still here, mostly poor and afflicted with all the problems of poverty — ill health, alcoholism, and lack of education — but still defiantly Indian, many clinging to scattered bits of their homelands."

Ulrich then recounts the federal policy intrigue behind the Termination efforts against the Menominees in Wisconsin, the Klamaths and western Tribes in Oregon, the Alabama-Coushattas of Texas, the Catawbas of South Carolina, the Paiute Bands in Utah, numerous Tribes in California and Oklahoma, and the Poncas of Nebraska.

Ulrich's stories of individual Tribes and their Terminations reveal that many factors contributed to the federal government's effort to end its trust responsibilities, and Native peoples were either coerced or outright ignored when it came to Termination. For small, poor



Tribes, such as the Paiute Bands of Utah, hearings were conducted in Washington, D.C., with little concern that Tribal representatives were not in attendance.

Area Bureau of Indian Affairs officials often misrepresented a Tribe's attitude toward Termination. In 1953, Grand Ronde Tribal members voted 20-0 to demand payment owed the Tribe for a land claim judgment before discussing possible Termination. The BIA presented that resolution to Congress in 1954 in making its case that western Oregon Tribes approved Termination.

"We were angry when we found out we'd been terminated," Grand Ronde Tribal Elder Leon Tom recalled. "We were not paying attention."

On a broad scale, societal factors behind Termination included the desire after World War II to reduce

governmental expenses, such as the Bureau of Indian Affairs, as well as a view that continuing to federally fund Native American Tribes was somehow akin to socialism or communism.

Termination efforts also were aided greatly by the "relentless ideology" of Republican Sen. Arthur V. Watkins of Utah, who arrived in the Senate in 1947 amid a flurry of legislative proposals designed to get the government "out of the Indian business" and force assimilation.

"In Oregon, people tend to blame former Gov. (Douglas) McKay and the timber interests," Ulrich says. "I think I was not prepared for the fact that this was much more of an ideological thing that predated McKay's move to Interior, where he was in a position to influence things. But he bought into the whole idea."

"I had not really known that much about Sen. Watkins of Utah,

and the more I read, the more I realized what a bulldog he was and how narrowly focused he was, and he absolutely brooked no opposition."

Watkins, who was chairman of the Indian Affairs Subcommittee of the Senate Public Lands Committee, was responsible for amending a House-approved bill that would have paid Menominee Tribal members \$1,500 in Tribal funds on deposit with the U.S. Treasury. He substituted termination of federal supervision for the requested payment, and the bill passed the Senate and paved the way for the Wisconsin Tribe's Termination.

"I don't think I have ever done research where I have come across someone that I began to so thoroughly dislike," Ulrich says. "I hope I at least gave him a fair break. ... He just had this idea that Indian Tribes should not exist and he was determined to see that they didn't."

Individual personal stories, however, testify that the Termination social experiment was "on a scale that was as startling in its magnitude as it was devastating to the experimental subjects. The financial, emotional and physical toll was tremendous."

For instance, 25 years after 1954's Termination, one-third of Grand Ronde Tribal members were unemployed and more than two-thirds lived below the poverty level. "Twenty years after Termination," Ulrich

writes, "93 percent of western Oregon Indians polled by the American Indian Policy Review Commission said they would advise other Tribes not to vote for Termination."

S.D. Aberle, executive director of the Commission on Rights, Liberties and Responsibilities of the American Indian, said, "One crucial problem is that terminated Indians do not automatically become average non-Indian citizens with birth certificates, Social Security numbers, recorded land deeds and a command of English and know-how which allows them to operate in white society."

"They have difficulty in knowing how to register to vote, how to comply with government regulations for a fishing or hunting license, how to obtain a Farmers Home loan or Soil Conservation Service assistance or other benefits the federal or state government offers its citizens. So Termination actually puts them in a class something like the newly-arrived peasant immigrants."

Ironically, Ulrich's research proves that the move to reduce federal government spending on Native American Tribes more often than not ended up costing federal and state governments more as they were forced to deal with the social ramifications of terminated Tribal peoples unprepared to live in the dominant culture.

Ulrich also recounts the Restoration efforts of each Tribe, starting with the Menominees in Wisconsin and including the efforts of the

Siletz, Grand Ronde, Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Indians and the Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Tribes in Oregon. She shows how Restoration, coupled with economic development spurred by gaming profits from casinos permitted under the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act of 1988, have helped terminated Tribes regain some of the economic, educational and health care ground they lost during decades of Termination.

However, most current-day Tribal leaders continue to lament the culture that was lost during two to three generations of Tribal members who grew up without knowing their Native heritage.

"We lost a lot of culture," says Michael Rondeau, chief financial officer for the Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Indians. "We will never be sure of some things we lost."

Ultimately, one is left wondering what the federal government was thinking when it adopted Termination as a policy.

"There appear to be three answers," Ulrich writes in the book's epilogue. "1. Saving money; 2. Getting rid of the Indians as Indians once and for all; 3. They weren't. While that last answer may seem

flippant, a study of records indicates that the policy was largely decided, and then reasons were developed to support it."

Ulrich says her most recent book will be the final one she writes about Native American issues. She is 82 and, at the behest of her two sons, she will write a memoir about her journalism career and work on family genealogy.

"For me, it was something that needed to be written," Ulrich says. "I would say we should learn the lessons from Termination — that it was a wrong-headed policy; that it did great damage; and that we should never allow any such thing to happen again."

"American Indian Nations from Termination to Restoration, 1953-2006" can be ordered for \$45 from the University of Nebraska Press by calling 800-848-6224 or visiting the Web site at [www.nebraska-press.unl.edu](http://www.nebraska-press.unl.edu). A copy also can be checked out from the Tribal Library in Grand Ronde.

"I keep telling people that the book is more interesting than the title and the cover," Ulrich jokes.

For those interested in Native American history and federal Indian policy, she's right. ■

## District picks Kalapuya as name of new elementary school

By Dean Rhodes

Smoke Signals editor

The Salem-Keizer School Board voted Tuesday, Jan. 11, to name its new elementary school after the Kalapuya Tribes of the Willamette Valley, making it the first Salem-Keizer school building named in honor of Oregon's Native American culture.

The Kalapuya Tribe is one of the five main Tribes of the Grand Ronde Confederation. Board directors acknowledged during the meeting that the Kalapuya peoples have a long history in Oregon.

"We need to honor history," said Board Director Steve Chambers. "What better way to do that than to name a school after the people who lived in this area for 8,000 years?"

The name honors the 19 Kalapuya Tribes that lived throughout the Willamette Valley from the coast to the Cascade Range, according to the Salem Statesman-Journal. As many

as 30,000 Santiam Tribal members thrived near Salem and about 10,000 Yamhill Tribal members lived across the river.

Tribal member David Lewis, Cultural Resources Department manager for the Grand Ronde Tribe, said he was encouraged that the district would name a school after the Kalapuya peoples.

"It's good that people are becoming aware there is a previous history here," he said.

Lewis submitted a letter supporting the Kalapuya name for the school. The letter outlined the long and continuous history of the Kalapuya Tribes in the region, including some of the Kalapuya place names, such as Chemawa, Chemeketa and Yamhill, and the fact that Salem is a location historically chosen by Tribal members to live in with easy access to the Reservation throughout the last 150 years of the Tribe's history. ■

## Nick Sixkiller is master of ceremonies

POWWOW continued from front page

annual powwow is Nick Sixkiller, arena director is Grand Ronde Tribal member Deitrich Peters and vendor coordinator is Mona Fisher, who can be reached at 800-922-1399, ext. 1230, 541-444-8230 or at [monaf@ctsi.nsn.us](mailto:monaf@ctsi.nsn.us).

The powwow will echo the two

previous events with Tribal educational booths, Native craft demonstrations, cultural drumming, dancing and Tribal vendors.

There also will be men's, women's and youth Western Oregon style Tribes hat dances. Family dances will include mother/daughter and father/son, and there will be a veterans' recognition honor dance.

Parking costs \$3. ■

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