

30th Restoration commemorative issue

Restoration testimony

Testimony of Kathryn Harrison in support of HR 3885 before the House Interior and Insular Affairs Committee, Oct. 18, 1983:



Today, for the first time, I feel at peace with my ancestors, the introduction of this Restoration Bill is a beginning of an ending; a eulogy and a greeting.

I am speaking here today, not only for people back home who are gathered together to celebrate this day, but also for those ancestors who completed our first Trail of Tears 127 years ago. Walking from Table Rock near what is now the city of Medford, Oregon, in a massive military round-up during the wintery month of February 1856. It took them 33 days to reach the present site of Grand Ronde. For those proud people who carried on, persisted, even stood alone to preserve our culture, Termination was not in their plans at all.

Did they make that walk in vain?

If you know anything about Indian people, especially the history of Grand Ronde Indians, a history that's not in the history books, you know we have endured much, but we have endured. With the coming of Termination in 1954, our second Trail of Tears began and is now in its 29th year; our children know of no other way of life. The economic impact was devastating and we became "experts" on poverty; our original reservation of 69,000 acres, with proper management, could have been a continuing, on-going support for us. As a terminated Tribe, we suffer from problems in addition to issues confronting other Tribes. Without resources, we are a minority among recognized Tribes, yet, not considered as equals either in the dominant society.

It has taken a lot of hard work, depressing and discouraging at times, but, there's always been the feeling that, as extensions of our ancestors, this restoration effort is the carrying out of their visions – and so we could always reach back to their strengths and wisdom.

Because of this, we have seen organizations come and go, yet the Grand Ronde Tribe continues. Our roots are there, but we need those roots confirmed by Restoration. We are not only looking at strengthening our culture, we are also interested in working for economic betterment, and so by helping ourselves, we are helping the total community.

Termination of Indian Tribes has been discredited by all of the U.S. presidents since President Nixon, yet my Tribe is still terminated.

But now, Congressman AuCoin knows and understands our plight and has joined us in our long walk toward rejoining the family of Indian Nations. By introducing our Restoration Bill today, he is giving us new hope that there is still "liberty and justice for all" in this United States of America.

Testimony of Frank Harrison in support of HR 3885 before the House Interior and Insular Affairs Committee, Oct. 18, 1983:

Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee:

My name is Frank Harrison, and I am a council member of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde Indians. I want to thank you for allowing me this opportunity to appear before you. I would like to tell you some of the effects of Termination on our Tribe.



As you know, Termination as a policy has been repudiated by the United States Congress since 1968, but my Tribe remains terminated.

The idea behind Termination was for Indian people and Tribes to become self-sufficient by assimilating into the white society; to compete with white people and thus to learn to advance ourselves. The concept was that Termination would have a positive effect on the Grand Ronde Tribe.

The facts, however, show that the opposite has happened. Termination caused a great hardship to our Tribe and our people are still suffering because of it. In 1982, we hired a firm in McMinnville, Oregon, to conduct a socio-economic study of our people. This study shows that the Grand Ronde Indians are lagging behind their white neighbors in health, employment and education. I would like, Mr. Chairman, to read some of the findings of this report.

Twenty-five percent of our Tribal members suffer from chronic health problems. Twenty-four percent are in need of medical attention but cannot afford it. Fifty-one percent have dental care needs which are not being met.

The tragic irony of this is that not far from Grand Ronde there is the Indian Health Service's facility at Chemawa Indian School. This is a modern and efficient facility, but our people cannot make use of its services because we are terminated and no longer federally recognized Indians. But the greatest loss has been our sense of identity. The loss of federal recognition affected the unity of the Tribe. Some people moved away. I remember going to other Tribes and having Indian people ask me what Tribe I was from, and having them not know Grand Ronde. This happened to me many times when I was growing up and still does today. This would not have happened if our Tribe had been federally recognized perhaps.

In seven ratified treaties, our Tribe ceded to the United States hundreds of thousands of prime acres, making that land available for white settlement; in return the United States agreed to provide health, education and economic development services. The United States agreed to protect our people; the United States recognized our sovereignty. Our Tribe has abided by the laws of Congress and we kept our treaty promises. We never consented to being terminated and yet Termination has unilaterally abrogated many of the promises made to our Tribe by the United States. We ask today that Congress close the gap of 29 years and restore our Tribe to its former status. Thank you.

An excerpt from the testimony of U.S. Rep. Les AuCoin before the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs in Washington, D.C., on Oct. 18, 1983. In this testimony, AuCoin urged the passage of the Restoration Bill, which he introduced.



Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of this bill. The main thing I want to stress this morning is my complete support for this legislation and what it seeks to do – and that is give the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde the tools they need to help themselves.

I'm convinced that Tribal status is crucial to Native American people and is a cornerstone for their collective success. To non-Indians, Tribal status may seem superfluous, unnecessary and perhaps even silly. But to Indian peoples, it is the vessel for their cultural rediscovery, and a source of their cultural identity.

Even though the Tribe was ill-prepared for the realities of Termination and many Indians floundered as unemployment soared, the Grand Rondes maintained an identity, a sense of community that persists today. It is a strong bond which may never be broken.

These Indian people are now ready to accept Restoration of their Tribe as a federally recognized entity. They are not asking for a handout. They are determined people who have earned the dignity of being called by this nation as a Tribe once more.