

Road to Restoration

1850s - The Grand Ronde Reservation is established by treaty arrangements and an executive order. More than 30 Tribes and Bands from western Oregon, northern California and southern Washington forcibly relocated to the reservation beginning in February 1856.

1887 - The General Allotment Act, which gave 270 allotments totaling more than 33,000 acres on the reservation to individual Tribal members, became law. This action led to the loss of major portions of the reservation to Indian non-ownership.

Key Tribal Events After Restoration

1984 - First official Tribal Council sworn in office.

Sept. 9, 1988 - The Tribe regains 9,811 acres of its original reservation when President Reagan signs the Grand Ronde Reservation Act into law.

1989 - The Tribe buys 5.6 acres along Highway 18 to house its Natural Resources offices. It is now the site of Spirit Mountain Casino.

March 1992 - Tribal Community Center completed.


1993 - Tribe purchases 240 acres of additional land along Highway 18 for economic development.

1994 - Tribal membership votes to pursue gaming.


October 1995 - Spirit Mountain Casino opens.

1996 - The Grand Ronde Tribal Housing Authority is established.


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Kathryn Harrison: Tribal Elder, now 89, who joined the Restoration effort in the early 1980s and was one of the five Tribal members to testify before Congress in 1983. She also has served on the Tribal Council as chairwoman.




Jackie Whisler: Tribal Elder, passed on, who joined the Restoration effort after being cajoled by her father, Dean Mercier, who asked her when she was going to come over and start helping her people.




Dean Mercier: Tribal Elder, passed on, who joined the Restoration effort in the 1970s and helped recruit his daughter, Jackie Whisler, to the Restoration effort. Along with Holmes and Kimsey, one of the first three Tribal chairmen.




Vic Atiyeh: Oregon governor during part of the Restoration effort who supported the Grand Ronde in regaining federal recognition as a Tribe.




Merle Holmes: Tribal Elder, who passed away in May 2004, was one of the three Tribal members in the early 1970s who started the effort to restore the Grand Ronde Tribe to federal recognition.




Margaret Provost: Tribal Elder, now 83, who was one of the three Tribal members in the early 1970s who started the effort to restore the Grand Ronde Tribe to federal recognition.




Donald Wharton: Member of Oregon Legal Services, which aided the Grand Ronde effort to obtain Restoration. He is now a senior attorney with the Boulder, Colo.-based Native American Rights Fund.




Les AuCoin: Oregon Congressman who was one of a handful of Oregon politicians to take up the cause of the Tribe and help Tribal members work toward Restoration. He served in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1975 to 1993. He now lives in Montana.



Elizabeth Furse: In the late 1970s and 1980s, she led the efforts of several Oregon-based Native American Tribes to win federal recognition, successfully lobbying Congress to grant federal recognition to the Coquille, Klamath and Grand Ronde Tribes. She succeeded AuCoin in the U.S. House of Representatives and served as director of the Institute for Tribal Government at Portland State University.



Marvin Kimsey: Tribal Elder, now 78, who was one of three Tribal members in the early 1970s who started the fledgling effort of restoring the Grand Ronde Tribe to federal recognition. After 11 years of work, he and other Tribal members succeeded when President Reagan signed the Restoration bill in late 1983.



Mark Hatfield: Oregon Governor and U.S. Senator who was instrumental in passing Restoration legislation for the Grand Ronde Tribe.

Key Players

1901 - U.S. Inspector James McLaughlin declares a 25,791-acre tract of the reservation "surplus" and sells it for \$1.10 per acre. Much of the land was purchased by local timber interests.

Aug. 13, 1954 - Congress passes the Western Oregon Indian Termination Act, which severs the trust relationship between the federal government and the Tribe. It meant that the Grand Ronde would no longer be acknowledged as Indians, and would have no rights to their reservation lands.

1968 - President Lyndon Johnson speaks against Termination as a federal policy.

Mid-1970s - Tribal members working on Restoration base their headquarters in the maintenance shed at the Tribe's only remaining land - the 2.5-acre cemetery. Shortly after Restoration effort began, funding for Restoration became a community effort, as children, adults and Elders held bake sales, car washes, etc., to raise money for postage and travel expenses.

1973 - Representatives of the Terminated Tribes in Western Oregon and Small Tribes Organization of Western Washington travel to Washington, D.C., to talk to any member of Congress who would listen.

1972 - A small group of Grand Ronde Tribal members, including Marvin Kimsey, Margaret Provost and Merle Holmes, starts thinking about restoring the Grand Ronde Tribe after attending an Association of Urban Indians meeting in Lebanon, Ore.

Nov. 22, 1983 - President Ronald Reagan signs Bill HR 3885 and the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde is reborn with 2,200 members.

October 1983 - Kimsey, Whisler, Kathryn Harrison, Frank Harrison and Karen Askins, along with Elizabeth Furse, travel Washington, D.C., to testify before Congress about restoring the Grand Ronde Tribe.

Late 1970s - The Restoration effort receives a \$90,000 grant, which funds the effort for a year and gives core members enough money to quit their jobs and devote all their time to Restoration.

1975-79 - A period of "no gains whatsoever," says Marvin Kimsey. However, a core group of Kimsey, Jackie Whisler, Merle Holmes, Jackie Provost and Margaret Provost and others continue working toward Restoration.

More Key Tribal Events

1996 - The Timber Trust Fund is established.

1997 - The Tribe opens its health clinic.

1997 - Spirit Mountain Community Fund established to award 6 percent of casino profits to worthy organizations and causes in western Oregon.

December 1997 - Grand Meadows, the Tribe's first housing development, is completed.

October 1998 - The Tribal Governance Center opens.

December 1998 - The Tribe opens Spirit Mountain Lodge, a hotel owned by the Tribe adjacent to the casino. The casino and lodge become the largest employer in Polk County.

1999 - Tribal Council passes the Gaming Revenue Allocation Plan, which distributes 25 percent of the casino's net revenue to Tribal members.