

30th Restoration commemorative issue



Nov. 22, 2013, marks 30th anniversary of Tribal Restoration Diamond anniversary a time to remember members who made it so

By Dean Rhodes
Smoke Signals editor

Nov. 22, 2013, marks the most important day in modern Grand Ronde history: the 30th anniversary of President Ronald Reagan signing House Resolution 3885, which became Public Law 98-165, the Grand Ronde Restoration Act.

President Reagan's signature officially ended 29 years of the federal government not recognizing what many Grand Ronde Tribal members knew deep in their hearts – that they were Native Americans and the federal government had responsibilities to uphold because of that status.

"The fact that the federal government doesn't extend recognition doesn't mean that you're not a Tribe, or not indeed a government," said Don Wharton.

In the late 1970s, Wharton founded Oregon Legal Service's Native American Program, which assisted terminated Oregon Tribes pursuing Restoration.

"The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde existed as a Tribe and a government; they just didn't have federal recognition," he said.

At its Diamond Anniversary of Restoration, members of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde have much to celebrate and be thankful for.

Spirit Mountain Casino unveiled in May 2008 its fourth major expansion since opening in 1995. The proceeds from that successful gaming enterprise provide the financial foundation for important educational, health and social benefits for more than 5,200 Tribal members today.

Since the Tribe's 25th Restoration celebration in 2008, the Tribe has participated in the five Gathering of Oregon's First Nations powwows, created and held in late January to remind Oregonians that the state's history did not begin with statehood and that Tribal members have lived in what is now Oregon since time immemorial.

Tribal flags were added to the Walk of Flags area at the state Capitol in Salem in 2009 and Grand Ronde had its ceremonial hunting rights re-authorized by the Oregon Fish and Wildlife Commission in 2009 as well.

Recently, the Tribe has seen the return of its ceded lands at Rattlesnake Butte near Junction City and at Chahpam on the North Santiam River near Stayton.

Culturally, the Tribe is resurgent. More and more Tribal youth participate in powwows and learn to speak Chinuk Wawa in school. Tribal members young



Photo courtesy of Land and Culture Department
From left, Tribal members Marvin Kimsey, Margaret Provost and Merle Holmes started the Tribe's Restoration effort in the early 1970s.

and old learn traditional crafts, such as basket weaving and making hand drums, through Land and Culture classes. Tribal youth have participated in the annual Canoe Journey experience since 2005 when they first paddled to Elwha in Port Angeles, Wash.

In addition, the Tribe started holding a First Salmon Ceremony in December 2011 and held a First Salmon Ceremony in West Linn in 2013, marking the first time in 130 years Tribal members held such a ceremony on the banks of the Willamette River.

Also, the first Coming of Age ceremony was held in more than 100 years for a young Tribal woman in 2013.

The Tribe constructed a traditional plankhouse – Achaf-hammi – at the new Uyxat Powwow Grounds near Fort Yamhill State Park, which held a grand opening in September 2010. Plans are under way to build a cultural center/museum to display Tribal artifacts and teach visitors about Grand Ronde history at the former middle school, which the Tribe purchased in 2011.

And there's much to look forward to as Tribal Council and Tribal members seek to improve Tribal services and diversify the Tribe's economy. Just earlier this year, the Tribe became a minority owner in SAM Medical Products in Wilsonville and purchased Shasta Administrative Services in late 2012.

Remembering the Restoration effort, the almost 30 years of Termination and the tortured history of the bands and Tribes that form the foundation of every living Tribal member is appropriate at 30.

Tribes rounded up

In the early 1850s, the ancestors of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde signed seven ratified treaties with the federal government that ceded most of

western Oregon, from the California border to the Columbia River and up the Columbia River Gorge to Mount Hood in return for promises of a reservation.

Members of several Native American Tribes and bands were rounded up by the U.S. Cavalry and walked under armed guard to the Table Rock Reservation near present-day Medford in 1853-55. The area was a temporary gathering place for Native peoples before the 33-day, 265-mile journey north to the Grand Ronde Indian Reservation that occurred in February and March of 1856.

Chief Bogus, late Tribal Elder Nora Kimsey's grandfather, died on the march to Grand Ronde, which occurred during cold and wet conditions. In all, eight Tribal members died and eight were born on what would become the Rogue River Tribe's Trail of Tears.

Grand Ronde ancestors who lived in the Willamette Valley spoke dialects of Molalla, Kalapuya, Clackamas, Chinook and other languages from neighboring Tribes. Those from the Rogue River Valley spoke dialects of Athabaskan, Penutian and Hokan. In all, Reservation residents spoke more than 25 different dialects from at least four different language families when they arrived in Grand Ronde.

The only Native language in common was Chinuk Wawa, which became the primary language for most reservation residents. While many of the ancestral languages were spoken for generations after relocation, eventually Chinuk Wawa became the common Native language for the Tribe and today is the recognized Native language for Grand Ronde. (In 2012, the Tribe published a new Chinuk Wawa dictionary, "Chinuk Wawa: As our elders teach us to speak it.")

Despite relocation to the supposed safety of the Grand Ronde Reservation,

the assault on the Tribes' ways of life continued unabated by the influx of white settlers to Oregon.

The 69,100-acre Grand Ronde Reservation granted by President James Buchanan's Executive Order in 1857 survived only until the value of the timber and mineral resources were recognized.

The 1887 General Allotment Act divided 33,000 acres of the reservation – almost half – into 270 allotments of land to Indians at Grand Ronde. The goal was to make farmers out of Indians and the act allowed Tribal members to live on their land tax free while it was held in trust. At the end of 25 years, the land was transferred from trust status to fee status and became taxable in an attempt to allow the Native families to eventually own the land.

However, most of the allotments went out of Indian control with "alarming rapidity," according to the Tribe's 1985 Reservation Plan. "This was true not only at Grand Ronde, but across the nation wherever allotments had been made under the General Allotment Act."

In 1901, following negotiations initiated by federal Indian Inspector James McLaughlin, the federal government declared 25,791 acres "surplus" and purchased it from the Indians for \$1.10 an acre or a per capita of \$72. Much of that land was then sold to local timber interests.

Many of the allotments that remained in Tribal member possession were eventually lost as indecipherable tax laws pushed some Tribal members to forfeit their land, while others sold out, raising money to survive. In addition, the Bureau of Indian Affairs would sell Tribal lands and not allow children to inherit the land.

The Indian Reorganization Act of 1936 enabled the Tribe to again purchase land on which to build homes for Tribal members on the reservation. Six ranch properties and one building site totaling 537 acres were purchased by the Tribe with IRA funds.

For those who stayed, life was hard.

Tribal Elder Nora Kimsey remembered making baskets to take to McMinnville in a horse-and-buggy to trade for clothes. She remembered long trips to Dallas to purchase groceries, as well as washing clothes in local creeks and catching crawfish and boiling them in tin cans.

Many Tribal members were sent to Indian schools and adopted by non-Native families, threatening the Tribe's heritage

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