

# Broken Promises; Forced Internment

The story of Amanda is part of a larger saga of stolen lands, broken promises, inhumane treatment, and forced internment under severe conditions.

In 1855 Central and Southern Oregon Coast tribes signed a treaty ceding their lands in exchange for what they thought would be a peaceful life on a reservation if the treaty was ratified.

In April of 1855, General Joel Palmer, superintendent of Indian affairs for the Oregon Territory, wrote a letter urging the creation of a reservation on the coast of the Oregon Territory to inter Native Americans. In November of 1855 President Franklin Pierce created, by executive order, the Coast Reservation. The new reservation was 1.1 million acres bounded by Siltcoos in the south, Cape Lookout in the north, and the Pacific Ocean to a ridge 20 miles to the east. This rugged land was considered of no value to settlers.

Three agencies were created to manage the Indians who were held there: the Siletz and Grand Ronde agencies (1856) in the north and the Alsea Sub-Agency (1859) in the south located in present-day Yachats near the Adobe Resort. The reservations prevented the Indians from re-establishing their villages on that land.

Coos and Lower Umpqua Tribes were forcibly marched to the Alsea Sub-agency in 1860, and the Alsea Tribe from the immediate north was forced from their homeland in 1865 when the reservation land was cut in half to allow for non-Indian homesteading.

The treaty was never ratified by Congress, which meant that the lands were never legally ceded, and funds for supplies and resources promised for this displaced population were not appropriated. Genocidal policies\* were carried out resulting in the death of many from the imposed harsh



*Lottie Evanoff (l), Coos, born in 1868; Umpqua man's reservation photo (r)*

treatment and conditions. Since the tribes were denied the weapons needed to hunt, they were forced to survive by farming the wind-swept salty coastal environment. Crops failed, and tribal members starved.

In 1872, tribal members were able to return to their more traditional hunting and gathering practices and successfully farm several miles up the Yachats River. When the U.S. Government found that the Yachats area was fertile for farming, it violated federal law, forcibly removing tribal members to remaining agencies. Many Coos and Lower Umpqua travelled south staying with their Siuslaw cousins or back to the Coos Bay area where they found their villages gone and became refugees in their own homeland.

*\*GENOCIDE: a coordinated plan of different actions aimed at the destruction of essential foundations of the life of national groups, with the aim of annihilating the groups themselves. The objectives of such a plan would be disintegration of the political and social institutions, of culture, language, national feelings, religion, and the economic existence of national groups, and the destruction of the personal security, liberty, health, dignity, and even the lives of the individuals belonging to such groups.*



*Alsea Indians on Alsea Bay*



*Tar Heel, Miluk-Coos born about 1810*

**THANK YOU TO:** *Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua, and Siuslaw Indians; Three Rivers Foundation; City of Yachats; View the Future; family and friends of Ben Christensen; Angell Job Corps*