

---

## Pauline Nellie (Bell) Ricks

### Who was Pauline Nellie (Bell) Ricks?

Pauline Nellie (Bell) Ricks was a member of the Tribal Council of the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians. The Tribal Pow-Wow Grounds in Siletz on Government Hill are named after her because she was an important Tribal leader.

### Early Life

Pauline was born on November 19, 1929, in Logsdan, Oregon. Her parents were Arthur Bell (some people called him “Jug”) and Angeline Louie Rippin. Pauline had 11 siblings. Her family was very proud to be Siletz people. They shared stories and dances from their people. They also shared history about the time when their ancestors lived on the lower Rogue River before they were forced to come to the Coast (Siletz) Reservation.

### Adult Life

When Pauline was growing up, Siletz people were treated badly for following their traditions and ways of living. The U.S. government took her Tribe’s land away and Pauline had to move away to find work. She moved to Eugene and worked as an Indian Education Coordinator. That means she helped get history and other facts about Tribes into schools so children could learn about them. She also helped Tribal youth to be proud of their people, like she was.

In the 1970s, Siletz people were working hard to get the U.S government to recognize the Tribe as its own nation. The Siletz people wanted self-determination (to be able to make their own decisions and live life their own way). Pauline was part of this work. In 1973, she was elected to the Tribal Council, a group of people who lead the Tribe.



---

## Pauline Nellie (Bell) Ricks *(Continued)*

### Later Life

In 1976, she went to Washington, D.C., with other leaders from Siletz. She spoke to leaders of the U.S. government. She told them the Siletz people should have their own, independent nation. Jimmy Carter, the President of the United States, listened to the group and agreed. He signed a law called the Siletz Restoration Act to give the Siletz people land and self-determination.

Around this time, Pauline also helped organize some of the first Pow-Wows at Siletz. A Pow-Wow is a big gathering where people from many different Tribes come together to dance, sing, and meet each other. Pow-Wows are an important part of life for many Tribes, like the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians. Pauline also became the Tribal Whipwoman. That means she was in charge of making sure that Pow-Wows run smoothly and correctly and that people behave in the right way. This is a very important job that requires good judgement, patience, wisdom, and the respect of the community.

Pauline died in 1995. To remember and honor her, the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians named the place where they hold their Pow-Wows today the Pauline Ricks Memorial Pow-Wow Grounds.

### Sources

Lane, B. "New Pow-Wow Sign Tied to the life of Pauline Ricks and her Legacy" *Siletz News*. January 2022 (50: 1). <https://www.ctsi.nsn.us/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Siletz-News-January-2022.pdf>