

# THE OBSERVER

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## 5 candidates race to serve on Imbler school board

By **DICK MASON**  
The Observer

**Editor's Note**

This article contains information about the candidates running for Position 5 on the Imbler School Board. The Observer's May 6 edition will have information about Position 3 candidates.

**IMBLER** — The Imbler School Board election is the hottest in Union County.

Two of its three races this year are contested, those for positions 3 and 5. No other Union County school board has more than one contested race.

Three candidates are running for Position 3, and two are vying for Position 5. Neither incumbent for those seats is running for reelection.

Position 3 candidates are Bud Whitcomb, the owner and operator of a custom body and paint shop; Tim Phelps, a sales and marketing director; and Joseph "Joe" Fisher Jr., a building official. The race for Position 5 is between Jason Beck, a rancher, and LaVar Bowles, a project manager for a construction company.

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## Fog remains over Joseph City Council

By **BILL BRADSHAW**  
Wallowa County Chieftain

**JOSEPH** — The Joseph City Council recently made progress toward replacing Larry Braden, who resigned as city administrator/recorder, but failed to answer the question of whether there will be an investigation into Braden's claim of harassment.

The council went into executive session Wednesday, April 21, to seek advice from Wyatt Baum, attorney for the city, but he declined to discuss in open session any advice he gave on a possible investigation.

The question was at the forefront of the minds of several councilors April 16 when Mayor Belinda Buswell read aloud Braden's resignation letter in which he stated, "the stress of the job as it is today and constant harassment from members of the current city council has become too much for me to handle and is affecting

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Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain

Nez Perce drummers perform during ceremonies Thursday, April 29, 2021, surrounding the turning over of the ownership of the now-closed Wallowa Methodist Church to the tribe. About 60 people, both from the tribe and the church, were on hand for the ceremony.

# 'We are here forever'

## Nez Perce Tribe takes title of Wallowa church

By **BILL BRADSHAW**  
Wallowa County Chieftain

**WALLOWA** — The Nez Perce Tribe took another step toward reestablishing itself in its traditional Wallowa County homeland on Thursday, April 29, when the tribe received the title to the now-former Wallowa Methodist Church.

The ceremony on the lawn behind the church included about 60 people, most of whom were Nez Perce tribal members from the Lapwai, Idaho-based reservation. Also in attendance were members of the United Methodist Church's Oregon-Idaho Conference, which has held title to the land and building since it closed.

"It's the transfer of deeds so this church is going back to the Nez Perce Tribe. We're very honored to be able to be here today for this," said Casey Mitchell, vice chairman of the Nez Perce Tribal Executive Committee. "Any land that comes back to the tribe is a blessing for us, considering this is originally our homeland that we were pushed out of."

Mary Jane Miles, a NPTEC member who was tabbed at the last moment to hostess the event, spoke of the gratitude the Nimiipuu — Nez Perce in their own language meaning "the people" — for receiving the land.

"The bishop of the Oregon-Idaho annual



Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain

Nez Perce Tribal Executive Committee Chairman Shannon Wheeler, center, receives the title to the former Wallowa Methodist Church from Allen Buck, of the Oregon-Idaho Conference of the United Methodist Church, as NPTEC Vice Chairman Casey Mitchell, left, and NPTEC member Mary Jane Miles watch Thursday, April 29, 2021, in Wallowa.

conference of the United Methodist Church has indicated this is an opportunity to join in a partnership with the tribe," she said. "This came to me this morning. I opened up my book and there it was, Luke 1:78-79 (she paraphrased): 'Our God will bring the rising sun to visit us, to guide our feet into the way of friendship, love, strength and peace.'"

At this, Miles looked to the sunny sky and seemed to acknowledge the fulfillment of prophecy.

"The Nimiipuu — the people — are tied to this land," she said. "I heard one of the ladies say this morning, 'We are here forever.' It just seemed to warm my heart with what is happening today, how favored we are to be getting this land back to our homeland. And the Nimiipuu are here to stay, and I thank you for your drums that just bring in the spirit of the Nimiipuu. ... The Creator is

See, **Church**/Page 5A

# Step back in time on Mother's Day in Elgin

## Elgin Museum begins third year at town's former city hall

By **DICK MASON**  
The Observer

**ELGIN** — Locals can revive memories of an old grocery store and lumber mill on Sunday, May 9, when the Elgin Museum opens for its spring and summer season.

New features at the museum include a small wooden shopping basket for the old Model Grocery Store in Elgin and a collection of photos from the town's old Han-

ford F. Reed Lumber Co. All are items people have provided to the project during the past six months.

"We are so thankful for all the help we have received from the community," said Gerald Hopkins, president of the board of directors of the Elgin Museum and Historical Society.

The Model Grocery Store basket is empty, but next to it are the prices of groceries from the store, which is believed to have operated in the 1920s and 1930s. They included: 10 pounds of sweet potatoes for 42 cents,

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Alex Wittwer/The Observer

Gerald Hopkins (left) and Charlie Horn inspect a painting in the main lobby of the Elgin Museum Saturday, May 1, 2021. The Elgin Historical Society's museum opens for its spring and summer season Sunday, May 9, on Mother's Day.

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**WEATHER** Full forecast on the back of B section

**Tonight**  
37 Low  
Mainly clear

**Wednesday**  
76/55  
Some sun; warmer

**CONTACT US**

541-963-3161  
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La Grande, Oregon

Email story ideas to [news@lagrandeobserver.com](mailto:news@lagrandeobserver.com).  
More contact info on Page 4A.



THURSDAY

JOHN HANLEY'S POLITICAL CARTOONS

Online at [lagrandeobserver.com](http://lagrandeobserver.com)