

Weekly Chemawa American

VOL. 11

NOVEMBER 6, 1908.

NO. 20

Denounce Fair At Toppenish

Indians Are Fleeced by Unscrupulous Whites, Says L. V. McWhorter.

Serious complaint was filed against the Indian fair, or potlatch, which was recently held at Toppenish, just inside the Yakima reservation in this county.

L. V. McWhorter, who probably has had more experience with the Indians and knows them better than any other white man in the state of Washington, has prepared an open letter on the subject, which reads as follows:

"The great Indian fair, or potlatch, at Toppenish has closed. The gaily blanketed visitors from the Umatillas, Nez Perce and kindred tribes have left for their distant homes while many a Yakima awakes from the festivities to wrestle with the wolf at the door. The good white neighbors would do well to consider some of the things which transpired during the two weeks of the potlatch.

What was the object of this much-exploited fair? If for a social and moral betterment of society, it was a marked failure; but if for a bacchanalian revelry and fleecing of the inebriated native,

then, surely, it was an immeasurable success.

"To one who has studied this phase of Indian life the gathering was an orgy of debauchery and a disgrace. Firewater is the bane of the redman, and with a battery of seven saloons flanked by a score of bootleggers, poor Lo, so long as he could raise a dime, felt no want for tum. The writer saw more drunken Indians there in one day than he ever did before at one time in his life. Old men, bleary-eyed and staggering; young men reeling or wallowing in the mud were to be seen in numbers at all times.

Nor were such scenes confined to the men alone. One intoxicated Indian was picked up on the streets, and thrust in the city jail—to die.

The better class of Indians were disgusted. A Nez Perce pointing across the street to a comely young Yakima woman, said, "That woman was drunk last night and her friends had to care for her." Then turning, he designated a young Indian, a mere boy, who bare-headed, was going to a pawn shop to redeem the hat which he had "soaked" for whiskey the evening before. At times this soaking business was carried