

The ‘Roaming Nez Perce’ on a level playing field



MAIN STREET

Rich Wandschneider

Our national founding documents talk about all men being created “equal,” and many see the history of the country as a gradual expansion of “all men” to include black men — 14th Amendment, 1868; women — 19th Amendment, 1920; and, in 1924, when they were finally given citizenship in the country that had swallowed up their native lands, Indians.

But maybe we should look at the playing fields rather than the players. Granting citizenship to former slaves didn’t stop the immediate advent of Jim Crow and a century of Southern white control of the playing field — the buses, educational and political systems, the rich lands and rich parts of the economy. It took civil rights and voting legislation in the 1960s to get African-Americans tenuous seats at the political and economic tables. And it took Title IX — in 1972 — to get women voters into medical and law schools, and, in gradually increasing numbers, into public office. (Although

famous for its impact on sports, Title IX said that any educational programs that used federal money had to be equally available to women.)

The Indian issue is even more complicated, because they were here first, and the immigrant white Europeans wanted/needed their land. According to a new book, “Nation to Nation: Treaties Between the United States and American Indian Nations,” in the earliest days, before nationhood, when Indians had land and power, and the English, French and Dutch had goods, guns and diseases, treaties were negotiated among peers. And through the War of 1812, when the English and the new Americans vied for Indian support, there were two serious efforts to construct Indian states. But the English and French retreated from America, and the Indians were left on their own — tribe to tribe — to deal with an advancing white, mostly Anglo-American, population gobbling up their lands. Treaties became one-sided, and quickly abandoned by American power brokers when more land was “needed” — or gold discovered. The playing field grew slippery — but tilted always white.

Anglo-American “Manifest Destiny” was the intellectual cover for filling the continent, and once America had filled up, coast to coast, and had attached Alaska and Hawaii, the great consolidation and sorting out of its residents began: The Civil War; Reconstruc-

tion and Jim Crow; and the “Indian Wars” in the West. Anglo-Americans were joined by German, Scandinavian, Italian, Polish, and eventually Asian immigrants. Chinese were imported to help build railroads — and “excluded” when their labor was no longer needed. Slaves were freed — and left in economic bondage as sharecroppers until they too joined the Great Migration north and west. Indians were shunted to the side, on reservations — remnants of their former lands, or forcibly placed on lands totally removed from their original lands, but lands that seemed worthless or of less value to expanding Euro-Americans.

Our Wallowa lands came late to this American saga; the Nez Perce here lived as they had for millennia through the early days of the nation, gladly found and adapted the horse to their cultural practices of seasonal migration, their roamings over great portions of the lands between the Rockies and the Cascades. But fur traders found them, and before them the diseases that passed from them, tribe to tribe, until in the 1780s great numbers of Indians vulnerable to white diseases died of them before they saw the white carriers.

The fur traders did come, and then the missionaries, the settlers and the gold seekers. The 1855 Treaty, which left room for a northern railway route, but left the Nez Perce plenty of land, including the Wallowa, had

to be rewritten when gold was discovered in Idaho. The 1863 Treaty reduced Nez Perce lands by 90%, but as there was no gold in the Wallowa, Chief Old Joseph just refused to sign the treaty and came home.

Not miners, but white stockmen, having had a bad year in the Grande Ronde Valley, spotted grass and brought their stock. Chief Young Joseph was welcoming, and thought there was plenty of land for whites and Indians; but, of course, more whites came, and the level playing field tilted white. President U.S. Grant, in a last-ditch effort at fairness to a people who had always treated whites fairly, thought the Wallowa could be evenly divided, and in 1873 proposed leaving half of the it to the “Roaming Nez Perce of the Wallowa Valley.” The growing white population weighed in, responded with a petition signed by over 200 men — and Grant rescinded his treaty revision. Then there was war, and Indian exile from this homeland.

In an alternative history on more level ground, we might be living in a United States which included the Indian states of “Lenape” — of the Delaware; and of “Tecumseh,” of Shawnee and related tribes in the upper Ohio.

And the Nez Perce would still have a home in the Wallowa.

Rich Wandschneider is the director of the Josephy Library of Western History and Culture.

An Idaho congressman aims to dump dams



WRITERS ON THE RANGE

Rocky Barker

Rep. Mike Simpson is a conservative Republican from Idaho whose concept of wildness in the 1990s was going into the rough at a golf course.

He fought higher taxes and remains a strong advocate for gun and states rights. But he changed as he waged a 13-year campaign to protect the Boulder-White Cloud Mountains in Central Idaho. He began hiking the area, finding it a place of God. “The streams, the lakes, the forests are His cathedral, and you don’t desecrate a cathedral, you preserve it,” he said in 2014.

The next year, Congress unanimously passed his bill to protect three areas of the White Clouds totaling 256,000 acres, enough to put him among the likes of wilderness icons Sen. Frank Church and former Interior Secretary Cecil Andrus. But he wasn’t through.

In 2018, Simpson walked into the meadows

of a stream in Idaho’s Sawtooth National Recreation Area. In the water he saw a 3-foot-long female salmon that had survived an 870-mile trip to the Pacific Ocean and back.

He came back to the meadow in 2019, where he watched a female salmon dig a redd, or nest, out of the gravel for her eggs. Her tail was beaten down to the flesh as hook-jawed red males darted in and out, competing to spread their milt to impregnate the eggs. It’s the way it’s been done for thousands of generations.

“These are the most incredible creatures I think that God has created,” Simpson said. “We shouldn’t mess with it.”

Yet we have, and \$17 billion in fixes later, salmon are still going extinct because of dams that block them from spawning.

Simpson recounted the story at a 2019 conference in Boise. Listening were farmers who ship their grain on barges from Lewiston, Idaho; Nez Perce tribal leaders; and power producers who depend on the four Snake River dams that block salmon. But how to move the ball?

Biologists for 20 years or more have said removing the four dams — half of the eight between Idaho and the Pacific — was key.

Simpson began the tedious process of meetings — 300 of them — with everyone involved in the salmon-dam conundrum. He asked:

Could the four dams be destroyed, pulling salmon back from extinction? Could people depending on the dams be made whole?

Simpson answered “yes” to both questions this February by unveiling his \$33.5 billion bill: Power produced by the downed dams would be replaced, the electric grid throughout the Northwest upgraded, alternatives found for farmers shipping grain and billions of dollars would go toward economic development.

Simpson made sure there was something for everyone in the four states of Oregon, Washington, Idaho and Montana. There were billions for improving water quality, and a shift in control over the dollars that pay for salmon conservation, from a federal agency to a panel convened by the states and Indian tribes. The bill would create the Lower Snake River National Recreation Area, replacing reservoirs with the rapids of a free-flowing 100-mile stretch of river.

The price for salmon advocates would be a 35-year moratorium on litigation and a license extension of 35 years for other dams in the region. This is a high price, as conservation advances for salmon since the ‘90s have come about mostly through lawsuits.

But the price is worth the risk. I watched the Elwha River’s dams come down in Western Washington in 2011, and saw how quickly the steelhead returned to their former abun-

dance, along with salmon and even birds and other species.

Senate Majority leader Chuck Schumer has said he plans to carry President Joe Biden’s “Build Back Better” infrastructure bill through the budget reconciliation process, to avoid a filibuster and require only Democratic votes to pass. Simpson wants his proposal to move with that bill.

For now, it’s in the hands of the region’s Democratic Senators: Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley of Oregon, Jon Tester of Montana, and especially Maria Cantwell and Patty Murray of Washington. One veto could kill the bill.

But Simpson has convinced a powerful group he’s serious, and President Biden, if he’s serious about environmental justice, should get on board, too.

Shannon Wheeler, chairman of the Nez Perce Tribe Executive Council, told me the absence of salmon for the past 65 years has left a void in the landscape and in the lives of the Nez Perce. Now, he said, “There is potential for a lot of healing with this legislation.”

Rocky Barker is a contributor to Writers on the Range, writersontherange.org, a nonprofit dedicated to spurring lively conversation about the West. He is a longtime reporter for the Idaho Statesman.

Gardening is an activity with multiple benefits



IT’S ABOUT HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Ann Bloom

Although the snow, frozen ground and ice tell a different story, spring and warmer weather are just around the corner, and with the change in weather comes thoughts of gardens, warm soil and fresh vegetables. Seed catalogs are already flooding mailboxes and gardeners of all types — from beginning to the very experienced — are beginning to plan their 2021 gardens.

Gardening has many benefits, health and otherwise. Gardening is a way to get some of the recommended 60 minutes of physical activity per day for adults and youth. Raking, weeding and hauling hoses gets the heart rate up. Working outside is relaxing and can help with depression and aids with sleep.

A garden is also a source of fresh produce

during the summer months and beyond. Produce can be preserved through freezing, drying or canning. Some vegetables that lend themselves well to freezing include green beans, broccoli and corn. Many vegetables also can be dried for use in soups in the fall and winter. Herbs also dry well (and quickly) using a food dehydrator or just left on the counter. Fruits dry well and can be made into fruit leathers for healthy snacks. Tomatoes and other vegetables are also able to be preserved through canning using either a water-bath canning method or a pressure canner. For more information on food preservation methods, contact your county Extension Service office or visit the Extension Service website at www.oregonstate.edu/fch/food-preservation.

Gardening can be educational in teaching children about the life cycle of plants and the importance of composting in adding nutrients back into the soil. Children can plant seeds, water and pull weeds from garden beds. They can be taught the whys and how-tos of thinning and, when the vegetables are ripe, how to harvest. Children also can learn simple preparation methods in the kitchen, from

washing and drying the lettuce for a salad to shelling peas and snapping the ends from the bush beans.

Will this be the year you plant pole beans or try Zebra tomatoes? How about that new variety of zucchini, or will it be three types of basil for a new twist on your favorite pesto recipe? Is this the year you experiment with parsnips? Whichever way you go, maybe Oregon State University can help.

For the second year, OSU is running the Grow This! challenge to encourage and help Oregonians to grow their own gardens. OSU is making seed kits available to individuals, groups, schools and other organizations around the state as a way of encouraging those who have never tried gardening and helping experienced gardeners try new varieties of seeds. The seed kits are free and contain packets of vegetable seeds (packets for cool and warm growing seasons), herbs and/or edible flowers and flower seeds which encourage pollination by bees and other pollinating insects.

Master Gardeners in Oregon are also participating in the Grow This! program and providing feedback on which seeds are suc-

cessful growing in different parts of the state in different growing conditions.

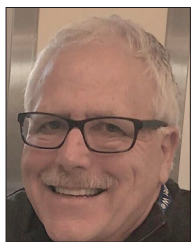
The seeds are free through a generous donation from Bi-Mart. There are only 8,000 seed kits available statewide. The seeds are available on a first-come, first-served basis. Anyone interested in a seed kit can now sign up using the link www.foodhero.org/growthis. Seed kits will be available until they are gone, but anyone can participate with their own seeds. Seed kits will be delivered to county Extension Service offices and those who have ordered seed kits will be notified when they may pick up their kits.

Educational gardening videos, how-tos and hand-outs, live question-and-answer sessions on Facebook and email support will be offered during the growing season April 1 through September.

For more information or to order a seed kit go to www.foodhero.org/growthis.

Ann Bloom lives in Enterprise and has worked for the OSU Extension Service for 15 years as a nutrition educator. She studied journalism and education at Washington State University.

The importance of teaching United States history



OTHER VIEWS

Scott Smith

Over the last several months we have witnessed history happening in our country that has not happened since the Civil War. It is United States history in the making. Do you remember your U.S. history classes? How well do you know the Constitution and amendments and what they stand for? Yes, there are those who do understand really well and those who think they know them, and those who really don’t know. What does the First Amendment really mean?

In many schools dealing with remote learning, especially at the elementary ages,

the teaching of social studies has sadly taken a back seat. Understanding the schools are doing their best in these unprecedented times, now is a great time for all of us to review what our founders felt would make us a leading country. The United States is a network of people and cultures working together for the betterment of the world and was designed 246 years ago knowing the country would grow and change. Have we taken it for granted?

We as adults should use this opportunity to refresh ourselves and bring our children into the discussion of what it means to be a United States citizen. Below are some general questions along with resources you might consider when locating and fact-checking yourself. There are many ways of using the internet to search and locate information. Engaging with your children on this quest will give them a stronger understanding of just how to locate and discuss information about questions that develop during their life.

Our government is built on three areas: the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and the amendments. Understanding them and discussing why they were written might provide for a better understanding of just why our government operates the way it does along with what our responsibilities are as United States citizens.

The Constitution: When and where was it written? Who were the authors? How many parts are there in the Constitution?

• kids.britannica.com/kids/article/constitution/352996

The Bill of Rights: What is the “Bill of Rights”? Who were the authors and why? Do they still apply today? How?

• www.ducksters.com/history/us_bill_of_rights.php

Amendments: What are constitutional amendments? Who and how can you make an amendment? How many amendments are there? You hear people say, “It’s my First Amendment right.” What does that mean?

• www.ducksters.com/history/us_constitution_amendments.php

How do the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and the amendments impact our daily lives? Do they really mean what you assumed they did? What are some ways you might be able to support our government? We are a diverse country made of multiple cultures each having its own perspective and understanding. Over the last couple of months has our government been in jeopardy? These are all questions we should reflect on as Americans, United States citizens, and how these issues could be peacefully addressed.

Scott Smith is a Umatilla County educator with 40-plus years of experience. He taught at McNary Heights Elementary School and then for Eastern Oregon University in its teacher education program at Blue Mountain Community College. He serves on the Decoding Dyslexia Oregon board as its parent/teacher liaison.