



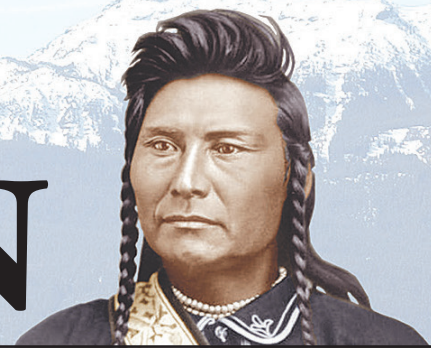
THE WEEK  
IN PHOTOS  
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137th Year, No. 4

WINNER OF THE 2020 ONPA GENERAL EXCELLENCE AWARD

Wednesday, May 5, 2021

# WALLOWA COUNTY CHIEFTAIN



## Coming home



Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain

The Wallowa United Methodist Church, built in 1910, was handed over to the Nez Perce Tribe, the original inhabitants of the land, Thursday, April 29, 2021, during a ceremony between church officials and the tribe.

## Tribe gets more homeland back

### Methodist Church handed over to Nez Perce

By BILL BRADSHAW  
Wallowa County Chieftain

WALLOWA — The Nez Perce Tribe took another step toward reestablishing itself in its traditional Wallowa County homeland Thursday, April 29, when it 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 June 30.

It was a time of thanksgiving, reconciliation, tradition and blessing on all parts.

"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



Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain

Gift exchanges were part of the ceremonies Thursday, April 29, 2021, when the United Methodist Church handed over the ownership of the now-closed Wallowa Methodist Church to the Nez Perce Tribe, the original inhabitants of the land. Here, Tribal Chairman Shannon Wheeler, right, holds a flat of lavender plants considered integral in the tribe's food sovereignty program. At left, Vice Chairman Casey Mitchell holds a staff and a bag of eagle feathers the tribe will make use of.

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 tapped 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 conference of the United Methodist Church has indicated this is an opportu-

nity 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 ... as to how this all played out. The Creator is certainly going before us and doing things for our favor. ... Most indigenous groups are 'the people' and we are the people."

Speaking to the tribal drummers, who added an air of Nimiipuu authenticity to the occasion, Miles said in a moth-

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## Wallowa County Voices



Kellee Sheehy  
Enterprise

### She celebrates 'small-town victories'

JOSEPH — Kellee Sheehy has lived in Wallowa County about four years and works as the development director at the Joseph Center for Arts and Culture in Joseph, but it's the "small-town victories" that make it home.

Married to Ryan Sheehy, who has a solar development company in the county, the couple has two children, ages 13 and 10.

Ryan grew up in Wallowa and brought his family here after 20 years in the Marine Corps. They'd lived in San Diego for nine years.

"Really, it was my decision," Kellee said. "I said, 'Why don't we just move to Wallowa?'"

The family had already started putting down roots in the county.

"We'd bought some property in Lostine, thinking we'd potentially come back here at some point," she said. "We had a lot of what we call 'small-town victories,' where we'd go to the post office and be out in five minutes or go to the courthouse and need to meet with someone and actually get to meet with them. Every time that'd happen, we'd come out and high-five and say, 'Small-town victory! You can't do that in San Diego.'"

She recently shared her thoughts about living in Wallowa County.

#### What's your favorite thing about Wallowa County?

We live right across from Enterprise Elementary School and I can sit there drinking my coffee and watch them walk to school. In San Diego, I'd have to drive one a half-hour one way and the other a half-hour the other way in heavy traffic.

#### What are your thoughts on Larry Braden resigning as city administrator over alleged harassment by council members?

I don't know enough about it ... so I'm just going to say no comment.

#### Did you know the city has declined to reveal whether it will investigate the alleged harassment?

I would like to know. I think there are always reasons for investigating such things. I would say yes, but I really don't know a lot about it.

#### How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected you?

I've been recently vaccinated. ... I think we've been a little more privileged in Wallowa County. When COVID-19 hit, it came to the county a little bit later and there's been a lack of general panic. I've certainly appreciated that.

#### Were you at all hesitant about getting the vaccine?

I've lived all over the world and I've seen polio and other diseases and I think there's more fear of not being vaccinated than being vaccinated. But I did get really sick on my second shot.

#### What have you learned from living in Wallowa County?

I have learned a lot about living in a rural community because this is my first time doing so. With my experience at the Joseph Center and how people pull together and that must be a product of people having a history of needing to rely on each other.

#### What's your advice for people who are thinking about moving here?

Go for it. There are opportunities for job. There are opportunities for families and children. Housing and rent can be tough, but that can change. Everything changes.

— Bill Bradshaw,  
Wallowa County Chieftain

## COVID outbreak closes Wallowa High School

### Sixteen cases of COVID-19 reported in the county in the past week

By RONALD BOND  
Wallowa County Chieftain

WALLOWA — Wallowa High School closed for two weeks, effective Thursday, April 29, after several COVID-19 cases were confirmed at the school, Superintendent Tammy Jones said in a post to the district's Facebook page April 29.

According to the post, six individuals tested positive for COVID-19 — two April 28, and four other



Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain

Wallowa High School was closed Thursday, April 29, 2021, because of an outbreak of COVID-19. It was expected to remain closed for two weeks, officials said.

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