



Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain

Nez Perce drummers give an air of authenticity to ceremonies held April 29, 2021, surrounding the turning over 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.

Homeland:

Continued from Page A1

erly way, “I was telling them this morning to behave yourselves. I watched these boys grow up, so I always tell them that when they’re drumming. I am so very proud of them.”

NPTEC Chairman Shannon Wheeler, who headed the tribal delegation in accepting the property, was particularly moved at the experience.

“As we think about this land and our people moving from here, being forced off of this land, and the year of sorrow as we left,” Wheeler said. “As the story is told, the last Nez Perce who left looked back and thought, ‘We may never see this land again.’ Think about that; put yourself in that place at that time. It’s who we are as the Nez Perce people and the tear that came down their face that day. We didn’t do anything. All we wanted to do was live. All we wanted to do was live in peace. ... So for those tears of sorrow at that time — today, if you shed a tear that’s OK because they’re tears of joy now because of the land that is being gifted back to the Nimiipuu. The people’s tears of sorrow on that day will be tears of joy. That memory in our blood that flows to each of us, their sorrow is felt today. Our tears of sorrow and joy today will also be felt by our ancestors in the past. That’s what this means to us today. ... Our Nez Perce people will think back and look at this day and remember the Methodist Church and their kindness in recognizing that the first people, the Nimiipuu and our rightful position here in this land here where we stand.”

He also said that the people from the Methodist Church and others involved in the transaction will go down in history books alongside others who will be remembered for their kindness.

The final pastor of the church, Kaye Garver, also was on hand. She said that when the church closed, the congregation consisted of but five people, down from its peak of about 200 in the 1960s and 1970s.

“We didn’t have the money to do the needed repairs and pay the insurance,” she said. “It was a



Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain

Mary Jane Miles, a member of the Nez Perce Tribal Executive Committee, introduces NPTEC Chairman Shannon Wheeler during ceremonies to turn over ownership of the Wallowa United Methodist Church to the tribe Thursday, April 29, 2021.

sad but necessary thing. The younger people wanted to move out of the county; they wanted to go to the city and everybody else aged.”

Pastor since July 1, 1999, Garver recalled coming to the church somewhat hesitantly.

“When I came here to interview for the job, I had my doubts as to whether or not this was going to work,” she said. “I pulled up outside and there was an angel stained-glass window and I said, ‘OK, that’s my sign.’ I walked in and there were three people I knew from church camps over on the coast and I’m going, ‘OK, that’s my second sign.’ So this is where God has led me and the church has been just fantastic people.”

Garver recalled how active the church had been in the Wallowa community.

“We’d do a lot of things with the community. We’d do breakfasts on Memorial Day Weekend Sunday for the whole community. We would do other meals and dinners during the year for the community,” she said. “On Christmas Eve, ours was the only Christmas Eve service in town. We brought in people from all denominations for that Christmas Eve service.”

But Garver thinks it’s fitting the property goes to the tribe.

“It’s a joy that, although we had to leave that building when it closed, that it’s now going to the Nez Perce,” she said.

Laurie Day, director of connectional ministries for the Oregon-Idaho Conference UMC, confirmed the desire of the church to cement its relationship with the Nez Perce in turning over ownership of the property.

“The church has a relationship with the Nez Perce

Tribe and we checked with them to see if they would like to have the building and the property because they were the original inhabitants of this land,” she said. “Today is the ceremony where we are returning the property to the Nez Perce.”

She said the cash value of the property didn’t even come into play.

“It was not part of our conversation in returning the property,” she said. “It was out of friendship and it was the right thing to do. It was not about the financial. It wasn’t part of our decision, so it didn’t factor into it.”

Wheeler and Mitchell agreed that there are no certain plans as to how the property will be used. They said the NPTEC is expected to meet to make such plans.

“The building’s old, so we’re not sure if we’re going to keep it,” Mitchell said of the 1910 structure. “The idea is everything’s sky-high right now, as far as property goes. We do have a powwow in July here so we may use this as a camping ground and let the folks use the showers and the bathrooms when the powwow’s going on. We usually have it at the Tamkaliks (the Homeland Project in Wallowa).”

Miles concluded the festivities on a solemn note.

“Now I offer a prayer, in the Name of your Son, Jesus Christ, for this gathering that we are in as we walk and you go before us that you are leading into a place of ‘peace that passeth all understanding.’ As the world goes, we know there is disunity, but in this particular occasion, we are against that and we rebuke it,” she said. “We thank you for what is happening with our brothers and sisters. We are grateful. We say all of this in Your Son’s Name, Jesus, the Christ, amen.”

COVID: As of May 3 roughly 40% of Wallowa County has been vaccinated

Continued from Page A1

positive tests earlier in the week. In a post April 27 that first outlined the details of the outbreak, the district said that it did not plan to close. That plan changed April 28. Jones told the *Chieftain* that all six of the individuals noted in the post were students, and a seventh student tested positive over the weekend.

“We are working closely with our local and state health authority to respond to this news and protect the health of our community,” Jones wrote in the Thursday morning post. “We are rapidly putting the contact tracing logs together and providing them to local health officials for contact tracing. Given the timing and

the numbers of contacts that local health officials will need to contact, we are immediately closing our high school.”

Students in grades six through 12 were moved to distance learning April 28 and will remain there through May 11. A local health official will contact parents who have a student who is required to quarantine, Jones said in the post. Students in kindergarten through fifth grade will remain on campus, Jones said.

The Facebook post April 27 linked the outbreak to a community prom, which the post said was not a school sponsored activity.

“Many Wallowa County students attended this event, along with community chaperones,”

the post stated. “(April 27) we learned that a number of individuals attending the prom have tested positive for COVID-19.”

She added that any athletes will be able to compete during the move to distance learning as long as they are not in quarantine.

The school’s cases are part of 16 cases reported in the county in the last week. Oregon Health Authority reported two cases on April 27, three on April 28, April 29 and May 1, four on April 30 and one on May 3. The increase brings the county’s overall total of cases to 176.

According to state data, as of May 3, about 40% of the county’s population — 2,903 people — have been vaccinated against the coronavirus.

The most valuable and respected source of local news, advertising and information for our communities.

www.eomediagroup.com

Winding Waters
A Non-Profit Community Health Center

Improving the health of Wallowa County!

Same-day medical, dental & mental health appointments!
In-clinic, virtual, and home visits six days per week.

Monday - Friday 7 a.m. - 7 p.m.
Saturday 9 a.m. - 1 p.m.

JOSEPH | ENTERPRISE | WALLOWA

www.windingwaters.org
541-426-4502

603 Medical Parkway
Enterprise, OR 97828



LARGEST THIRD RACK AVAILABLE

The KitchenAid® FreeFlex™ Third Rack fits 6” glasses, mugs, bowls and cooking tools. Plus it’s the only third rack that cleans with two rotating wash jets. All without compromising space for larger items below.

KitchenAid®

ELGIN ELECTRIC CO.

43 N. 8th • Elgin • 541-437-2054
Open Monday-Friday 10am-5pm



FREE DELIVERY WITHIN WALLOWA COUNTY

Call 541-437-2054 to make special arrangements. Some restrictions apply.

*Among leading brands based on usable volume. Available on select models. ©/™ © 2020 KitchenAid. All rights reserved. Printed in the U.S.A. D200134XX

OVBC
Oregon Values and Beliefs Center

We want your voice to be a part of the conversations shaping Oregon's future.

Share your opinion. Earn money.
Join the OVBC Panel.
panel.oregonvbc.org