

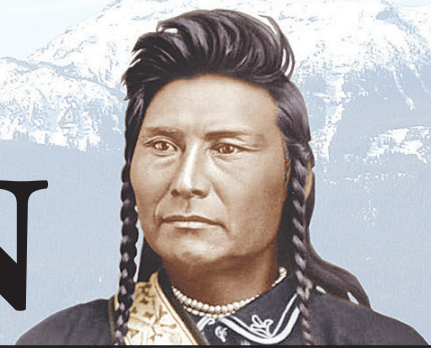


**BULLFIGHTERS: THE UNSUNG HEROES OF RODEO**  
LOCAL, A3

**BROWN REPEAT HIGHLIGHTS ACTION AT 75TH CJD**  
SPORTS, A9

\$1.50

# WALLOWA COUNTY CHIEFTAIN



137th Year, No. 17

WINNER OF THE 2020 ONPA GENERAL EXCELLENCE AWARD

Wednesday, August 4, 2021

## Wallowa County Voices



**Gail Pelley**  
Enterprise

### New to the county and she loves it

ENTERPRISE — Gail Pelley moved here with her husband, Paul, nearly two years ago and built a house north of Enterprise — after falling in love with Wallowa County.

They lived in their travel trailer for eight months while their house was being built. Most recently, they lived in San Jose, California, and before that, Florida.

Gail Pelley said they read a book that talked about Wallowa Lake.

“My husband, whenever he reads about a place, he likes to look it up,” Gail said. “So he found pictures of the area.”

They visited two years in a row for several weeks.

“He just fell in love with the mountains,” she said. “He was originally from West Virginia and grew up in the mountains and loved the mountains, so ... we bought a lot.”

She’s a retired registered nurse of 40 years and Paul retired from being a certified financial planner.

“We love it here; the people here have been amazing,” Gail said.

She recently shared her thoughts about living in Wallowa County.

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

It’s hard to pick one, but we haven’t met anyone here who wasn’t wonderful. The people here are great, the views are great. We live where we’re looking at the mountains. It’s very peaceful and not stressful.

#### What plans do you have in the county for this summer?

We’re planning to start volunteering at the senior center.

#### What are your thoughts now that fire season is here?

My heart goes out to the folks who have had to evacuate and have lost their homes. We pray every day for them, but I’m not a worrier. God’s in charge and I’m not.

#### What do you think of the job the firefighters have been doing?

Every time I see one, I thank him for working out there to try to take care of us. ... I have great respect for those who put their lives on the line to try to keep us safe.

#### What do you think of all the crowds and traffic that come for Chief Joseph Days?

I plan to not be in the middle of a big crowd. It’s better to be safe and not sorry.

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

We try not to tell people too much about it because we don’t want to see a lot of traffic lights show up and keep it the way it is.



Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain

Nez Perce tribal members return to Am’saáxpa by horseback Thursday, July 29, 2021, in a commemoration of the way their ancestors left in the 1870s. The land was recently reacquired by the tribe.

### Nimiipuu bless Am’saáxpa, the place of boulders, during a return ceremony

By **BILL BRADSHAW**  
Wallowa County Chieftain

AM’SAAÁXPA — In 1877, Young Chief Joseph of the Nimiipuu led the Wallowa Band down Imnaha Canyon to what is now Dug Bar to cross the Snake River into Idaho while being pursued by the U.S. Army. As the Nez Perce crossed the Snake, they looked back, hoping to one day return.

Most never did — in their lifetimes.

But in recent years, the tribe has been regaining bits and pieces of their former homeland. One of the most recent acquisitions was the 148-acre Hayes Farm just west of Joseph, which the tribe finalized its purchase Dec. 9. On Thursday, July 29, tribal members returned on horseback — just as they left — to that land called Am’saáxpa: the place of boulders.

“There was a point where our elders turned back and thought they would never come back, and many never did,” said Nakia Williamson, the tribe’s cultural resources director Thursday. “So ... just as our people left on horses, we wanted to come back on horseback.”

More than 200 people gathered — many Nimiipuu from scattered locations at the Lapwai, Idaho-based reservation, but also from Oregon and Washington — to formally bless the land they had reacquired.

“This is a good thing with us riding home,” said Shannon Wheeler, vice chairman of the Nez Perce Tribal Executive Committee. “There will be a lot of healing that will be happening here. From the time of ... leaving, we still feel that pain today. ... We still carry that with us, but we also can release that, too, because we are coming home and this is a big part of who we are. There are other places our people have moved — over 70 villages throughout the region and along the waterways — we’re very glad we have the opportunity at this time to be able to come home.”

#### Tears of sorrow

“I woke up this morning and looked at the mountains, the valley, the streams, the lake — it’s such a beautiful country that we have here,” NPTEC Chairman Sam Penney said. “The Treaty of 1855 preserved rights



Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain

Nez Perce tribal elder Allen Pinkham expresses the heartfelt feeling he had Thursday, July 29, 2021, as the tribe gathered for the Return to Am’saáxpa to bless land just west of Joseph recently reacquired by the tribe.



Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain

Nez Perce tribal members, escorted by tribal police, make their way down Wallowa Avenue in Joseph during the Return to Am’saáxpa Parade on Thursday, July 29, 2021. Am’saáxpa, or the place of boulders, is the former Hayes Farm just outside of town that once again belongs to the tribe.

for Nez Perce members: hunting, fishing, gathering, property rights that were guaranteed to the Nez Perce Tribe — forever. Then we had the 1863 Treaty, which is commonly called by the Nez Perce people, the ‘steal treaty,’ which reduced the reservation to its current size.”

The 1855 Treaty, signed by the U.S. government and

numerous Nimiipuu chiefs — including Old Chief Joseph, who is buried near the foot of Wallowa Lake — set aside 7.5 million acres of the tribe’s ancestral lands in Idaho, Oregon and Washington and the right to hunt and fish on lands ceded to the U.S. government. But after the discovery of gold near Pierce, Idaho, and increas-

ing encroachment by white settlers on Nez Perce lands, the 1863 Treaty reduced the reservation to about 750,000 acres.

Many of the Nimiipuu rejected the 1863 Treaty, dividing the tribe into treaty and nontreaty Nez Perce. Old Chief Joseph was of the latter group, since the “steal treaty” did not include the Wallowa Valley — the home of his band. Before dying in 1871, he told his son and successor to never give up their homeland.

Although Young Chief Joseph tried to maintain peace and keep the Wallowa Valley for his people — including a negotiation held at Am’saáxpa — he and his band were ultimately forced out, leading to the Nez Perce War of 1877. Never considered a war chief, he was highly valued as a camp chief for his wisdom and charisma, numerous historical sources say, according to historylink.org. Still, Joseph did his best to lead his band to safety, with the goal of joining Chief Sitting Bull and his Lakota Sioux in Canada out of reach of the U.S. Army.

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